

SPECIAL FIFTIETH ISSUE

*cine***ACTION**



Hitchcock Cukor

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cineACTION

THE COLLECTIVE

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FRONT COVER: Top: Anthony Perkins, *Psycho*
Bottom: Audrey Hepburn, *My Fair Lady*

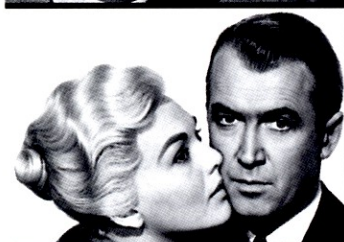
BACK COVER: Greta Garbo and Robert Taylor, *Camille*



THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS
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FONDÉ EN 1957

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AT THE CENTURY'S END



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with Barbara Harris on
Family Plot, 1976.

with Ava Gardner on
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HITCHCOCK & CUKOR

EDITORIAL

This issue is offered as a celebration of our fiftieth publication and of the centenary of two great figures from classical Hollywood.

In most respects the achievements of Hitchcock and Cukor are in strong contrast, but they have one crucial feature in common: their recurring gravitation toward women and their positions within patriarchal culture, as the centre of sympathy and identification. There is a tendency today to insist that Cukor was 'not just a women's director'—and this of course is true. However, his remarkable sensitivity to female characters and to the actors who portrayed them remains the vital core of his work.

The case of Hitchcock is more complex and problematic: there was a period not so long ago when his work was under attack for its frequent enactments of violence against women (physical, emotional, psychological). But it is precisely Hitchcock's ambivalence (ultimately, toward the surfacing of his own femininity) that made possible the extraordinary analyses of the very roots of male domination and female victimization that run through his movies.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our regular readers and subscribers for their support over the past fifteen years: they have helped make possible the continuation of this magazine, along with the continuing and generous support of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council. And we want to acknowledge here, with gratitude, the enthusiastic work of our designer, Bob Wilcox.

Richard Lippe and Robin Wood

The Spatial World of Hitchcock's Films

The point-of-view shot, the camera and 'intrarealism'

by Susan Smith

If the spatial dimension of film is an essential component of point of view in cinema, then this is particularly so in the case of Hitchcock's films, a fundamental preoccupation of which is the exploration and manipulation of the possibilities and plasticity of narrative space. As I hope to demonstrate by an analysis of *The Paradine Case* (1947) later on, the global spatial system of a Hitchcock film—how it organizes, segments and presents its narrative world—is crucial in helping to shape our overall attitudinal outlook upon that world. At the other extreme, how a Hitchcock film utilizes the innermost detail of its fictional universe can be equally vital in determining the various ways in which we relate to its narrative subject matter (as my section on objects will also endeavour to show).

Generally, though, such spatial features have tended to be obscured in favour of the more well-trodden territory of the point-of-view shot. This orientation of a highly complex theoretical concept around a single camera technique is indicative of the central weighting traditionally attached to character perspective in point of view and its perceived role in effecting spectator involvement in classical narrative cinema more generally (the latter nowhere more so than in Hitchcock's films where POV shooting is often cited as a key strategy for implicating the spectator in a single character's viewpoint). Yet despite the substantial, somewhat disproportionate critical emphasis placed upon POV shooting, this technique has often suffered from a degree of over-simplification when enlisted in support of various theoretical approaches, its popularity generally stemming from the underlying assumption that, in enabling the spectator to occupy a charac-

ter's literal viewpoint, it also provides access to that character's subjectivity.

The POV shot's perceived ability to build the spectator into a character's experience was accordingly construed by structuralist and semiotic film theorists as evidence of the way in which mainstream narrative cinema functions hegemonically to inscribe the spectator into a fixed, dominant ideological position. According to suture theory, for example, this strategy of assigning ownership of the camera's field of view to a character within the fiction was a key device for distracting the spectator from an awareness that such a view is, in fact, controlled and authored by a presence outside of the frame ('the absent one'). The POV shot's function was, then,



to 'suture' its audience into an illusory sense of oneness with the film world, thereby effacing the very operations and mechanisms by which such effects were achieved (see, for example, Daniel Dayan, 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema', in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods: Vol. 1*, University of California Press, London, 1976, pp.438-51). As William Rothman proceeded to point out in 'Against "The System of Suture"' (again in Nichols, ed., 1976, pp.451-59), such an approach took no account of the viewer's ability to read the POV shot quite knowingly as a convention (as opposed to being duped into naively accepting the character as the fallacious author of the shot). The possibility that the dominant ideology may, in any case, be subject to critique by the film and/or resistance by the spectator was also ignored, as was the issue of how the POV shot functions within its overall filmic context.

The tenuousness of suture theory's basic premise is evident when one considers a sequence such as that in *Notorious* where Alicia snoops outside of her bedroom door in an attempt to overhear Alex's altercation with his mother as he tries to obtain the household keys from her. Having employed a conventional POV sequence, whereby the camera cuts repeatedly from a shot of Alicia listening intently to a view of Madame Sebastian's closed door, Hitchcock then confounds this logic on the third such occasion. Hence, Alex is shown emerging from his mother's room from what still appears to be Alicia's point of view (thereby creating a momentary jab of anxiety at the prospect of him discovering her spying), only for it to be revealed that the shot is no longer a POV shot, Alicia having stolen away in the meantime. In *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (Mouton Publishers, Amsterdam, 1984), Edward Branigan also discusses how this sequence subverts our conventional expectations about the POV structure. Yet his own interpretation of its significance (considering it as designed to convey 'a deeper understanding of Alicia's character and intentions—the state of her awareness', p.109) does tend to overlook some of its more radical implications. For what the sequence enacts, in effect, is a reversal of the suturing process, one whereby the previous assignment of a particular field of view to a character is subsequently prised apart, enabling the character herself to attain a rather surprising independence from the camera.

Laura Mulvey's highly influential theory that the point of view or look constructed for the spectator by mainstream cinema is male (irrespective of the actual gender of real audience members) constituted a particular feminist development of such approaches and one that inevitably invested subjective camera techniques with a newfound significance (see 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods: Vol II*, University of California Press, London, 1985). The monolithic, non-contextualized nature of Mulvey's psychoanalytic theory of mainstream cinema as patriarchal has, of course, been subject to much challenge and debate from various theoretical and critical quarters. Concentrating upon the text itself, Robin Wood argues that: 'The construction of identification within a film is a delicate and complex matter that can never be reduced simply to the mechanics of "the look" (the look of characters, of spectator, of the camera)' (*Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, Faber and Faber, London, 1991, p.305). While acknowledging its role, Wood considers the male gaze to be only one of several factors involved in the construction of identification and demonstrates convincingly how, in *Notorious* (1946), it is the only one which privileges the male characters, all of the others favouring the Ingrid Bergman character instead. It is possible, I think, to go even further and argue that, in Hitchcock's films (which Mulvey uses in support of her theory), the male gaze itself is often shown to be inherently unstable as well as unconvincing as an identification device.

Such tendencies can be found as early as in the silent film *Champagne* (1928). There, the inability of the male gaze to control the female image is illustrated quite explicitly during the scene

where the Betty Balfour character visits her fiancé in his cabin as he lies in bed with sea-sickness. The subjective image of her that ensues from his point of view shows three versions of her head: two swaying from side to side in opposite directions, the middle one lunging towards him. In doing so, it conveys in very vivid terms this male character's sense of the threatening, uncontrollable nature of her active sexuality (a clear demonstration of which had already been provided by her earlier gesture of flying out over the Atlantic in her aeroplane to meet up with him on board ship). Another emphatic instance of this occurs in *Rich and Strange* (1932) when the male protagonist, Fred, is shown unable to hold his wife's image steady within the frame of his camera viewfinder as he tries to take a photograph of her on the deck of a moving ship. Far from simply encouraging identification with the male protagonist's possession of the female via the active, controlling power of his gaze, the sequence invites us instead to witness a quite radical destabilisation of such control (and one which coincides with Fred being confronted by a rather more glamorous, eroticized view of his wife than he had hitherto been used to). If anything, the directly subjective nature of this particular POV sequence serves to distance us from Fred for, in showing his perspective through the camera viewfinder, it inevitably draws attention to the role of the film's own camera in mediating the spectator's view. In doing so, it renders visible the two 'looks' that, Mulvey argues, the conventions of narrative cinema usually seek to efface and subordinate to those of the characters: 'the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience' (Mulvey, in Nichols, ed., 1985, p.314).

Rather than simply constituting a momentary loss of control, this sequence is quite typical, in fact, of the film's overall strategy of remorselessly disempowering the male protagonist of his privileged status within the narrative. This process of destabilisation is initiated right at the beginning of the film when, during his journey home on the London underground, Fred loses his balance on more than one occasion, such disorientation at one point causing him to grab at a woman's hat for support. After he is shown watching this female passenger fixing the feather dislodged by him back onto her hat, another POV sequence occurs where subjective alignment with the male gaze again serves to expose masculine insecurities rather than convey any sense of being in control. This takes the form of Fred looking first above the woman's head at a poster advertising 'CLOTHE YOUR WIFE at GARRIDGES', then left to another inviting its readers to 'Dine tonight at the MAJESTIC', and finally down to a male passenger eating a large, rather unappetising sandwich. Fred's subsequent show of distaste for this more mundane food consequently provides a very visceral expression of his sense of dissatisfaction and inadequacy in the role of breadwinner and provider for his wife. The sea-sickness sequence develops these tendencies much further. On this occasion, his more severe form of nausea prompts him to throw away his 'phallic' cigar and then retreat (like his counterpart in *Champagne*) to the womb-like space of his cabin room, where he lapses into a totally passive state while his wife pursues an affair with one of her fellow passengers, Commander Gordon. Fred's failure to photograph Emily and thereby render her the object of his desire can also be contrasted with her ability to make an active inscription of her own desire via the same medium when, during a later scene, she sketches an image of herself onto a photograph showing Gordon sitting outside his home. Fred's recovery from sea-sickness is also swiftly undermined when, during his first reappearance on deck, he is yet again deprived of his 'gaze' on being hit in the eye by a quoit thrown during one of the ship's games by a woman calling herself the 'Princess'. Such literal blinding is quite clearly a symbolic one, too, and has the effect of discouraging any real identification with a character so oblivious both to his own faults and to his manipulation by this female. Such recurring losses of control over the male gaze consequently become symptoms of an unstable



Champagne



Murder



Notorious

masculinity overall. This process culminates in the more total dismantling that occurs during the shipwreck on the return journey home when Fred regresses to a state of child-like dependency upon Emily who (in a vindication of Gordon's earlier criticism of Fred as 'a great baby masquerading as a big, strong man') cradles her husband reassuringly in her arms.

It could be argued that both films' placement at a very early stage in cinema history is a crucial factor in enabling such subversive destabilisations of the male gaze to slip through 'uncensored' before the patriarchal mould of cinema had been fully cast. Yet these visual motifs concerning loss of balance, impaired vision and dizziness find their ultimate expression at a much later stage during the mature American period via the famous zoom in/track-out shot used to convey Scottie's condition in *Vertigo* (1958)—the most extreme, central instance of subjective male point of view in that film that Mulvey's own account rather significantly ignores. Unlike Mulvey, Wood acknowledges the importance of this device, considering it one of the main techniques used to enforce an uncharacteristically abrupt audience identification with the male protagonist at the beginning of the film (Wood, p.380). Yet precisely what we are being forced to identify with, first and foremost, is a sense of the male viewpoint or gaze as something fraught with tension and out of control, the impact and memory of which must surely qualify the standard reading of the film as one wherein the spectator is tricked into an apparently 'normal' identification with the male protagonist (as the possessor of the active, investigative look), only to discover the problematic nature of this two-thirds of the way through. In this particular context, I would tend to agree with Tania Modleski who argues that identification with the male gaze is problematized well before Judy's flashback (*The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Film Theory*, Routledge, London, 1988, p.87). Yet while, for Modleski, the vertigo shot 'so viscerally conveys Scottie's feeling of ambivalence ['between a hypnotic and masochistic fascination with the woman's desire and a sadistic attempt to gain control over her, to possess her'] whenever he confronts the depths' (p.99), its role for the viewer would seem to be doubly ambivalent—encouraging, as it were, an ambivalence about Scottie's own ambivalent state of mind. The contrary spatial pull of the shot thus enacts the way in which our more conventional impulse to identify with the male protagonist is countered by an equally strong urge to draw back from too intense an involvement.

That such highly subjective techniques serve in all three films to problematize as much as encourage identification with the male gaze suggests a complexity to the POV shot that is rarely acknowledged. While Robin Wood is one of the few to question the common assumption that this device guarantees identification—arguing instead that: 'In general, Hitchcock uses POV editing to clinch an identification that has already been solidly built' (Wood, p.308)—he does so in a way that tends to define it rather negatively, the implication being that if it doesn't necessarily produce identification then it doesn't do much else either. Daniel Sallitt takes a rather different approach to the POV shot, arguing that this tendency to define its role in relation to identification and character subjectivity is itself a misguided one¹ that overlooks its more important effect of installing the spectator directly into a film's narrative world:

Far from being a device to inflict the character's psychology on us, the point-of-view shot is somehow impersonal and remote from the character whose point of view is being used, as if our direct experience of a viewpoint would always outweigh our intellectualized inference of what the shot would make the character feel. ... The point-of-view shot is a means of putting the spectator in some relation, not to the character, but to the film universe (Daniel Sallitt, 'Point of View and "Intrarealism" in Hitchcock', *Wide Angle* 4, No.1, p.41).



Notorious

In de-emphasising the importance of POV shooting as an identification device (pointing instead to 'the realm of narrative structure and acting rather than in the realm of camera viewpoint for solutions to questions of sympathy and endorsement') and stressing its indicativeness of 'a broader interest in a visual exploration of the film universe' in Hitchcock's cinema (pp.41-2), Sallitt advocates a notion of direct spectator involvement not necessarily dependent upon characters. In doing so, he challenges the oversimplified assumption (one often made about supposedly single viewpoint films like *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo*) 'that Hitchcock's films are in some way dedicated to a notion of psychological subjectivity, that the films examine reality from an individual's viewpoint which we are compelled to share' (p.39). Instead, the POV shot is seen as a means by which 'to evoke ... the sense of a pair of eyes within the film universe, in some ways subject to the laws of the film universe as opposed to the laws of the film' (p.42). Sallitt coins the term "intrarealistic" to describe this effect and cites the use of extreme physical proximity of characters to the camera and the camera track-in device as two other key strategies used to create it. In emphasising a more phenomenological aspect of the spectator's viewing experience, Sallitt's approach avoids the opposite extremes of auteurist and structuralist theorising on the role of the camera. On the one hand, he counter-balances Rothman's view of the camera as a potent instrument by

which the filmmaker manifests 'his godlike power over the world of the film, a world over which he presides' (see *Hitchcock—The Murderous Gaze*, Harvard University Press, London, 1982, p.7) by emphasising its role as a function of the spectator's vision. Yet on the other hand, Sallitt doesn't proceed as far in the other direction as Branigan who, uneasy with such tendencies to anthropomorphize the camera, seeks to redefine it in such abstract, impersonal terms as 'a reading hypothesis' and 'a label applied by the reader to certain transformations of space' (Branigan, pp.53-4).

Certainly, it is possible to find several other examples, in addition to Sallitt's own, that demonstrate his theory. During the party sequence in *Notorious*, for example, the consistent exchange of looks between the three main characters (involving Alicia looking out for Devlin's arrival, Alex watching them together, and Devlin and Alicia both looking to see if he is watching them) illustrates 'the frequency with which Hitchcock switches the visual point of view from character to character within a sequence' (Sallitt, p.39) without jolting the spectator. Similarly, the repeated shot showing the champagne bottles gradually becoming depleted but from different characters' points of view (consisting first of Alicia's, then Devlin's and finally Joseph's) provides both a variation upon this

1 For another analysis that questions the assumed relationship between the POV shot and identification, see Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.156-65.

technique and an instance of what Sallitt regards as 'the large number of point-of-view shots in which there is no importance attached to a character's psychology, or even in which there is no particular character corresponding to the point of view' (p.41). The significance of a shot like this lies, instead, in its cumulative effect for the viewer alone, with its suspense charge in fact increasing as the owner of the POV shot decreases in identificatory importance.

The most obvious challenge to Sallitt's theory is that it makes no distinction between objective POV shots such as these (to which his comments apply very convincingly) and the kind of highly subjective, expressionistic instances of it to be found in films like *Notorious* and which Robin Wood, in his discussion of the sequence where Alicia discovers that she is being poisoned, sees as the culminating devices used to signal the moment in the film when 'our identification with Alicia, and with her experience of oppression, exploitation, and victimization, becomes complete' (Wood, p.309). The potentially very different effects that can be produced by these two types of POV shot are exploited quite clearly during the scene in *Rich and Strange* where the Hill couple receive a letter notifying them of their sudden acquisition of money. Whereas Fred's reading of the letter is conveyed via an objective view of its overall contents, Emily's is registered much more intensely and subjectively via an extreme close-up as she scans the words: 'Money to experience all the life you want by travelling'. If the POV shot's function is to act solely as 'a means of putting the spectator in some relation, not to the character, but to the film universe' (Sallitt, p.41) then, presumably, there would be

no need to present the same letter in such contrasting ways, the effect of which (unlike the aforementioned shot of the champagne bottles in *Notorious*) seems designed precisely to signal the very different ways in which we are being invited to relate to each of these characters. Sallitt's view (quoted earlier) that 'the point-of-view shot is somehow rather impersonal and remote from the character whose point of view is being used' proves quite inappropriate as an explanation of its role in the second of this pair, the whole purpose of which, in focusing only upon its most important message (to the extent that an artistic licence is taken by presenting on one continuous line what originally appeared on two separate lines of the page), is to reveal the impact of the letter upon Emily (rather than Fred, to whom the letter is ostensibly addressed). Sallitt's one concession that: 'If we know anything about a character's psychology during a point-of-view shot, it consists of stored knowledge from previous scenes or shots rather than information gained from the shot itself' (p.39) is also at odds with the way that this particular instance of it serves to contest our previous view of Emily as outwardly contented in her domestic role by suddenly opening up a much deeper, subjective level of otherwise unacknowledged fantasy and desire on her part.

Yet the ability of this particular POV shot to encourage audience involvement with Emily's emotional state has to be offset against the rather different impact of the previously discussed seasickness sequence from Fred's point of view. The fact that two equally subjective instances of this technique should encourage such contrasting responses highlights the POV shot's resistance to

Lifeboat



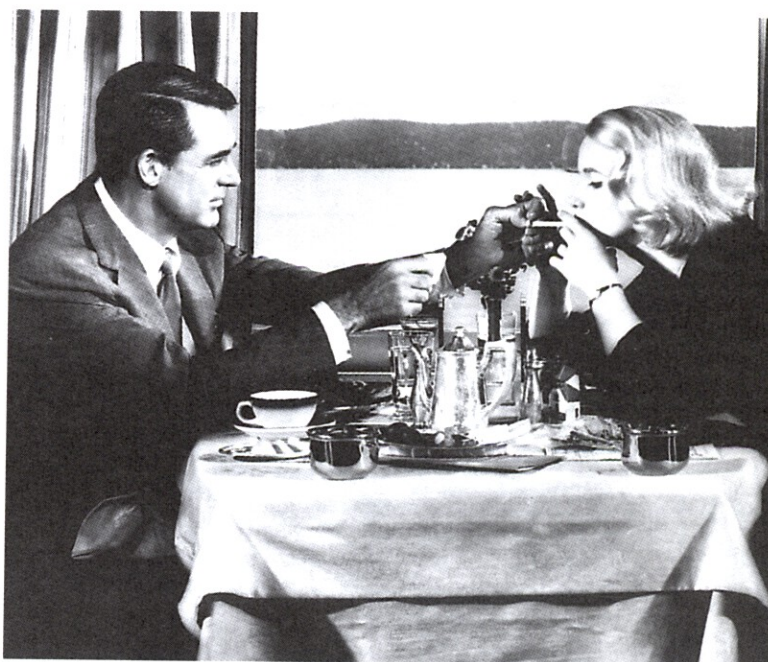
any easy definition or classification. Based upon these two examples, it might be reasonable to conclude that our reactions are influenced by the very different kinds of emotions involved in each case: consisting of positive feelings of aspiration, fulfilment and success on the one hand, where identification occurs, and the more negative, debilitating feelings associated with nausea on the other, where it does not. Yet, clearly, this cannot be applied as a universal rule for in *Notorious* it is precisely the latter with which we are being encouraged to identify in Alicia's case (and in even more severe form). What such comparisons suggest is the need to distinguish, unlike Sallitt, between the subjective POV shot's fairly standard ability (by definition) to provide insight into a character's psychological state and the more variable uses to which such insights can be put by the films themselves. An awareness of this distinction is crucial when evaluating the ideological viewpoint of the films. The flexibility with which they are able to use the same technique to produce a rather pleasurable, comic destabilisation of the male gaze in *Rich and Strange* and an intense state of identification with woman's experience of 'oppression, exploitation and victimization' in *Notorious* (Wood, p.309) is, in particular, a strong indication and source of their feminist orientation and appeal. In both cases, the oppressiveness of patriarchy from both gender points of view is conveyed, appropriately, via ruptures in the processes of seeing.

If Sallitt's approach doesn't distinguish the subjective instances of POV shooting from the more objective, neutral ones he refers to, then it also ignores a characteristic fluidity between these states in Hitchcock's films. An example of this again occurs in *Rich and Strange*, this time involving Emily alone at the hotel in Singapore. Having forgone the opportunity to go off with Commander Gordon, only to then see Fred desert her for the Princess, a close-up of her face is followed by a cut to a brief shot of a palm-tree lined beach with waves rolling up onto the shore. The ostensible inference to be drawn from this shot—namely, that it provides a literal rendition of Emily's view out of one of the hotel windows—is complicated by the fact that it is never really placed: we are given no other shots of this window, while all the others in the room reveal shutters and street scenes which would obstruct such a view. The shot's lack of concrete context thus renders it amenable to a more subjective reading that is inseparable from our understanding of Emily's character. For what it arguably represents is her imagined viewpoint as the figure of herself, sitting outside Gordon's home, that she had earlier sketched into her lover's photograph (with the two silhouetted bars in the foreground of the POV shot poignantly expressing her awareness of the unobtainability of this desire). In contrast to Sallitt's assertion that 'our direct experience of a viewpoint would always outweigh our intellectualized inference of what the shot would make the character feel' (Sallitt, p.41), this ability of a single POV shot to operate simultaneously on more than one level suggests instead that the production of meaning and process of interpretation may often derive more accurately from an interplay between direct and character forms of involvement.

Such fluidity even extends to a frequent interchangeability between POV and non-POV shots, as during the sequence discussed earlier where the camera's adoption of Alicia's POV as she snoops outside her room in *Notorious* suddenly switches, without warning, to a neutral camera viewpoint. Another frequent manipulation of the conventional POV structure in Hitchcock's films consists of a shot of a character looking at something off-screen followed directly by an otherwise objective view of what the character is wanting or intending to see but is not in a physical position to be able to see at that particular moment. During the same sequence in *Notorious*, for example, a shot of Alicia looking straight ahead, on hearing from Joseph that Alex is in the study, is followed by a cut to one of the hallway and study room door downstairs, the effect of which is to anticipate her own intended destination.



Rich and Strange



North by Northwest



Suspicion

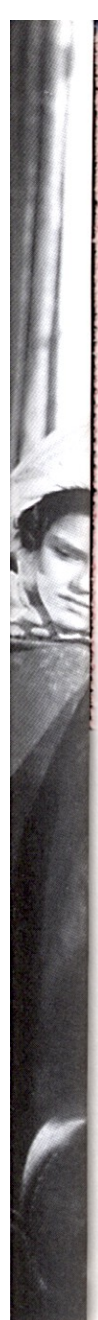


Young and Innocent

Similarly, during *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), a close-up of Jo staring at Ambrose Chapel is followed by a cut to a camera viewpoint from inside the building (with Jo still outside) where one of the kidnappers, Mrs Drayton, is shown. This use of the character's look as a prelude to or trigger for a view beyond her perceptual range supports, up to a point, Sallitt's own claim that the real function of a POV shot is to act as a device for installing us directly within the film universe. But far from demonstrating the dispensability of the character's viewpoint, such fluid transitions between POV and non-POV structures of seeing depend for their effect, in the first example, upon the disconcerting realization that our usual ties with the protagonist's consciousness have been broken and her subjectivity removed from the shot and, in the last two examples, upon the possibility of reading the non-POV shot as a projection or product of the character's own inner thoughts and imaginings. The overall effect of such shots, then, is to create the rather ambivalent sense of having access to a viewpoint simultaneously beyond a character's actual perceptual reach, and yet deep within her subjectivity.²

Sallitt's approach also tends to downplay the extent to which a

POV shot often depends greatly for its effect upon whose (rather than just what) viewpoint is being shown. During the party sequence in *Notorious*, for example, the POV shots showing Alicia and Devlin together derive much of their emotional coloration and suspense charge from our awareness that it is Alex who is watching them jealously and suspiciously—rather than, say, a more casual, neutral party guest. The significance of this is also highlighted equally well when such a view is withheld altogether, as during the earlier scene at the races when Alex's surprise disclosure to Alicia that he has been watching her with Devlin all the time through his fieldglasses immediately infuses the situation with a heightened sense of danger. Both instances involving Alex also demonstrate, in opposite ways, the importance of considering POV shooting within its wider spatial and epistemic framework. Our discovery that such a vital character perspective upon the couple's meeting has been withheld in fact produces a more extreme version of the kind of restricted viewpoint fundamental to Sallitt's notion of intrarealism. However, the essence of the restricted viewpoint derives in this case not from the POV shot itself but from the withholding of it in favour of an independent camera view that



seems (erroneously, in retrospect) to privilege us. In evoking the sense of a wider world existing continuously with but beyond the view framed by the camera, this particular sequence seeks to undermine the security of our viewing position by disilluioning us of any assumptions about being guaranteed an ideal vantage point upon the narrative world. What it implies, instead, is a world beyond the frame that is not fixed and static or extraneous to the main events occurring on screen but constantly changing and harbouring other potentially significant points of view, other 'pairs of eyes' (to use Sallitt's phrase), to which we are refused access. The insecurity produced in turn fuels the suspense of the main party sequence by anticipating Alex's eventual discovery of Alicia's double betrayal. At the beginning of the party, though, much of the suspense derives, conversely, from the film's strategy of now foregrounding the restricted nature of Alex's viewpoint compared to the more privileged one given to us. Thus, his initial view of Alicia and Devlin greeting each other acts as a trigger for a series of progressively closer, much more revealing views of the couple (still taken from his eye-line but beyond his perceptual reach): from a medium shot as they initially greet each other, to a close-up of their hand-shake, to an extreme close-up showing the transfer of the key. A variation on this occurs during Devlin's exploration of the wine cellar, when the shots of the wine stock list from his point of view are repeatedly interspersed with non-POV shots showing a wine bottle about to fall from the shelf. The POV shots to be found within such highly typical suspense sequences as these consequently form only part of a much wider, composite point of view that Sallitt's notion of restricted viewpoint ignores.

Sallitt's second intrarealistic strategy—'The use of physical proximity to the camera as expressive of the concept of proximity within the film universe' (p.42)—constitutes a specific, local manifestation of more general tendencies in Hitchcock's work, consisting of either a progressive closing in of the overall spatial world (as in *Notorious*, which becomes increasingly associated with the confines of the Sebastians' house) or a use of restricted sets from the very beginning. As the most extreme version of the latter, *Lifeboat* (1943) necessarily involves a sustained deployment of Sallitt's second intrarealistic device, in the sense that the cramped conditions of a single boat force the characters into an unusual degree of proximity to the camera. Consistent with Sallitt's overall view, such proximity does not seem to encourage a more intense form of identification with the characters. Indeed, the film is rather strangely below par in this area, with the only real strand of identification deriving from Tallulah Bankhead's performance in the main role (rather than as a result of camera proximity or any especial privileging of her point of view). Yet this lack of involvement can also be attributed to the way that such spatial confinement is itself offset by the correspondingly high degree of editing, fluctuating character compositions and camera mobility which such conditions seem to induce.

The various spatial segmentations produced by such techniques consequently invite a more distanced, critical perspective upon the various social structures and tensions operating among the characters on the boat. Thus, after showing the two upper class characters, Connie and Rittenhouse, absorbed in conversation during their reunion after the shipwreck, the camera then pulls back to show an alternative community of working class crew members (consisting mainly of the nurse and engine room workers) as they gather around the injured Gus. The camera's framing of Connie, the nurse and Mrs Higley together the next morning suggests the partial breaking down of such class divisions through the formation of an alternative female community (as also symbolised by Connie's gesture of giving her fur coat to Mrs Higley). This is followed, however, by a suggestion of racial tension and division when, during the crew's debate over the boat's course, Joe is segregated from the white members of the crew via the editing: his spatial isolation consequently acts as a corollary for his social margin-

alisation as a black person (a situation that is actually voiced by Joe himself when he asks: 'Do I get the vote, too?'). In positioning Joe along with the German U-boat captain at the other end of the boat at one point, the film invites an even stronger ironic critique of the other white characters by undercutting their display of repugnance at the Nazi (and the fascist ideology he represents) with a visual suggestion of their own rather more subtle marginalisation of the boat's one representative of racial otherness. So, rather than providing the ultimate vindication of Sallitt's notion of the camera as 'in some way subject to the laws of the film universe as would be the viewpoint of a presence in that universe' (p.34), *Lifeboat* demonstrates the camera's ability to overcome even the most extreme physical constraints. The most emphatic assertion of its prerogative to break 'the laws of the film universe' occurs two-thirds of the way through the film when it suddenly cuts to an underwater view of a fish being drawn to the crew's fishing bait. Within the overall context of Hitchcock's work, moreover, this tendency towards using restricted sets has to be offset against an equally strong interest in covering a very broad geographical sweep using the picaresque narrative structure (the most extreme example of which is *North By Northwest*).

Sallitt's emphasis upon the camera track-in 'from a long shot characterized by a sense of the normal or everyday to a closeup of some object or event which yields to us by inference some larger conclusion or piece of information' (p.43), pinpoints one of the key means by which we are often drawn right into the innermost, private realms of a Hitchcock narrative world. Indeed, it is a technique that provides a spatial correlative for Wood's own notion of the continuum between the normal and the abnormal. Sallitt sees this visual motif as further conclusive proof of the camera's restricted viewpoint: of the fact that 'the law of the film universe to which the camera is subject is that it sees only a certain amount of what happens and has to reconstruct meaning from a limited perceptual capacity' (p.43). Yet it is difficult to see how such an explanation can account adequately for the long travelling crane shots in to the drummer's twitching face at the end of *Young and Innocent* (1937) or to the key in Alicia's hand at the beginning of the party in *Notorious* (as variations upon the track-in device which Sallitt surprisingly ignores). In both cases, the effect, instead, is one of being privileged with crucial information beyond the other characters' reach and by a perceptual entity able to overcome the limitations of viewpoint inherent in Sallitt's anthropomorphic definition of the camera. Indeed, if such strategies do serve to convey the sense of 'a pair of eyes within the film universe', then the crane shot's version of this is (as suggested by its very name) more characteristic of the hawk-like precision of a bird than anything attributable to ordinary human perception.

Sallitt's argument that such a device arises from a need to reveal information previously withheld from us also fails to cater for the *Notorious* example. In that case (unlike the equivalent scenario cited by Sallitt involving Marion Crane's theft of the money in *Psycho*) we are witness throughout to Alicia's stealing of the key from Alex's ring, so that the subsequent track-in to it in her hand serves instead to reaffirm and enhance an already established sense of being privileged with crucial information. The camera's ability to seek out the film world's most hidden secrets via such elaborate movements also means that it is difficult to avoid the notion of some kind of sensibility or agency at work, guiding and controlling this perception in a way that can transcend the laws of the film universe to which the characters are subject. Furthermore, for those instances where the camera seeks out proximity with an aspect of its narrative world, there are also equivalent moments

2 Charles Barr uses the term 'hypnagogia' to describe what he identifies as a recurring 'hesitation between subjective and objective' in Hitchcock's British period. See Barr, 'Hitchcock's British Films Revisited', in Andrew Higson, ed., *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, Cassell, London, 1996, p.14).

when it pulls back and invites the spectator to observe it from an unusual degree of distance (one thinks, especially, of the abrupt cuts to high-level views of Thornhill escaping from the United Nations building in *North By Northwest*, of Keane leaving the courtroom near the end of *The Paradine Case*, and of the attack on Bodega Bay in *The Birds*). Sallitt's approach is also in danger of equating spatial proximity or restriction of field with epistemic inferiority of viewpoint whereas, in fact, it is the high level views in Hitchcock which often withhold rather than reveal (as, for example, during Norman Bates's removal of his mother from her bedroom to the fruit cellar), while a narrowing of visual perspective onto a tiny piece of data can, conversely, expand our overall position of knowledge considerably.

Sallitt's approach, then, is extremely insightful and provocative but somewhat incomplete. In its stress upon the camera's ability to offer us very direct forms of perception and inhabitation of the narrative worlds it bears affinity with some of my own work on objects in Hitchcock's films (more on which later). Yet the restricted viewpoint that it construes to be the product of such independence inevitably only caters for one side of the overall spatial perspective in Hitchcock's films, the full articulation of which consists of a more complex, ongoing dialectic between distance and proximity, expansion and contraction, detachment as well as involvement. Such an ambivalent, contrary pull finds its ultimate expression via the combined track in/zoom out shot used in *Vertigo*.

Spatial dialectics

This sense of being pulled in two different directions often manifests itself at a structural level in Hitchcock's films. In *Psycho*, Norman's oscillation between normal and psychopathic behaviour is reflected in his toing and froing between the Bates motel and the old house, with such divisions becoming increasingly prone to collapse. For the audience, too, such spatial tension forms the structural basis for the overall suspense in the sense that these two buildings serve as sites, respectively, for what is shown and known (at least partly) and what is withheld and feared. In *Lifeboat*, another form of spatial tension manifests itself in the characters' various disputes over the boat's course and the frequent changes in direction that arise as a result. The potential spatial dimensions or coordinates of this film world are highlighted by the points of the ship's compass, the possession of which object enables its holder to exert control over both the boat's and the narrative's overall direction. The text's own rhetorical stress upon the compass via the frequent close-ups of it in the German's hand also makes it a prized object in cinematic terms too. Indeed, if the compass functions as a kind of visual pun upon the notion of filmic direction, then in granting secret control over it to the Nazi captain (a privilege which he exploits by using it to manipulate the boat's course towards German territory), the film seems to offer an implicit warning about the potential abuse of its own cinematic powers. The other characters' subsequent discovery and theft of the compass appear to provoke, in turn, a retaliatory authorial storm which intervenes to reinstate the German as the (now quite explicit) figure of control within the narrative. This metafilmic element also helps to explain the rather oddly unresolved nature of the film's ending, as the crew's eventual murder of him deprives them of both the literal and symbolic 'direction' needed to bring the narrative to a conclusion.

This correlation between spatial and cinematic direction is also foregrounded at the beginning of *I Confess* (1952) via the sequence of four shots of the Quebec street signs showing "DIRECTION" arrows pointing right of frame towards the site of a murder. The effect is to establish right from the outset a strong sense of our point of view being directed towards the important events within the narrative world. Yet, as in *Lifeboat*, this is complicated by an acknowledgement of competing tensions: here, it occurs in the form of Hitchcock's own cameo appearance immediately before-

hand, when he is shown walking away in the opposite direction from where the arrows are pointing. In this case, though, the spatial tension seems to allude to a tussle not between the characters but between the filmmaker and text itself, with the latter appearing intent upon asserting and exposing what the former attempts to deny by walking away from the scene of the crime (for an interesting analysis of this film, see Deborah Thomas' 'Confession As Betrayal: Hitchcock's *I Confess* As Enigmatic Text', in *CineAction*, no.40).

Hitchcock's cameo appearance in *The Paradine Case* again shows him walking away from the narrative action when, having thanked someone for advice, he leaves the train station in Cumberland in the opposite direction to that taken by the male protagonist. Here, though, the direction and location of the filmmaker's cameo appearance are consistent with the overall way that the key events impinging upon the narrative (the murder itself, the affair and Latour's suicide) all take place outside the main courtroom arena. Despite its extensive use of such confined settings as the courtroom and prison, then, *The Paradine Case* is not a closed film to the same extent as, say, *Rear Window* or *Psycho*. Whereas the key events in these two films, although often withheld from us, take place within its clearly demarcated spatial boundaries (including Norman's murder of Mrs. Bates in the narrative's past tense), in *The Paradine Case* there is a rather uncharacteristic sense instead of the spatial (and generic) frame being out of alignment with an alternative narrative elsewhere. Such misalignment can, in turn, be seen as symptomatic of the film's dislike of and frustration with the ideologically (not just spatially) circumscribed structure of the legal world of the court. This attitude finds voice in Sir Simon's admission to Mrs. Paradine, during their first meeting at the jail, that: 'The fact is, I'm not very keen on this place', and in his subsequent promise that: 'We'll get out of it ... as soon as possible, as soon as possible.' The court's repressive function is demonstrated both by its punishment of those women, like Mrs Paradine, suspected of transgressing its laws and by its exclusion and marginalisation of more conventional women from its arena. As the court's main representative, it is Lord Horfield who both sentences Mrs. Paradine to death and refuses to allow his own wife, Sophie, to attend the court (on the grounds that her coughing distracts him). The film's negative attitude towards the legal system finds a more constructive outlet via its strategy of establishing a spatial dialectic between the 'masculine' domain of the court and the 'feminine' world of domesticity. The resulting interactions and interrelationships produced enable us to critically interrogate and assess, rather than merely accept, the ideological systems, values and laws enacted within its narrative world.

In the first place, the film seeks to undermine the ostensible oppositions between these two spatial spheres by using various editing and visual strategies to present the home as an extension of the legal system's oppressive patriarchal structure. The juxtaposition of scenes at the Keane home with those at the prison, for example, invite us to draw parallels rather than simply contrasts between them. This is developed through the extensive use of imprisonment motifs within the mise-en-scène of the Keane home: most notably, the prominent bedroom ceiling that seems to bear down upon the couple during their first encounter, the prison-like bars of a door window that are used to frame Gay's reaction to her husband's vehement defence of Mrs. Paradine against Sir Simon's insinuations, and the shadows cast by the staircase railings during Keane's return home from court. Such visual strategies serve, specifically, to undermine Keane's own insistence, when trying to dissuade Gay from travelling with him to Cumberland, that: 'This is the place for you—warm, cosy, protected'. Keane's patronising attitude towards his wife in turn implicates him with Horfield's more openly misogynistic containment of Sophie. The extent to which the women within the film are united by their shared experience under patriarchy is highlighted visually during a montage

sequence mid-way through the trial when a shot of Sophie sitting at home staring fearfully and somewhat resentfully at Horfield is followed by one of Mrs. Paradine lying in her prison bed (her lack of make-up providing a quite different, deconstructed view of her), and finally by one of Gay in similar repose as she pretends to be asleep while Keane looks in on her (it is, presumably, Judy's unmarried status that grants her exemption from this sequence).

Having exposed the oppressiveness of such structures, though, the film then proceeds to actively manipulate and subvert them. One way it does so is by allowing the domestic sphere to intrude into the courtroom. Hence, the female characters' unauthorized presence there constitutes an act of defiance that the film supports even further by countering their marginalised position in the gallery with repeated shots foregrounding their reactions to proceedings (Judy's interpretation of events for both Gay's and our benefit even endowing her with the status of spectator-in-the-text). The female characters' unauthorized presence within the court is matched by the recurring intrusion of 'feminine' elements of melodramatic excess within this 'rational' sphere. The key difference in this case lies in the film's consistent association of such elements with the male characters, as if suggesting the court's only partial success in containing their repressed 'feminine' sides. Thus, it is Keane's 'tendency to over-charge [himself] with emotion' that is presented as the precise source of Horfield's resentment towards him during their dinner party exchange, a trait which in turn provokes Latour's own hysterical outburst at the witness box and Horfield's subsequent warning reminder to Keane that 'this is not the first time that you have been responsible for an over-emotional atmosphere in court.'

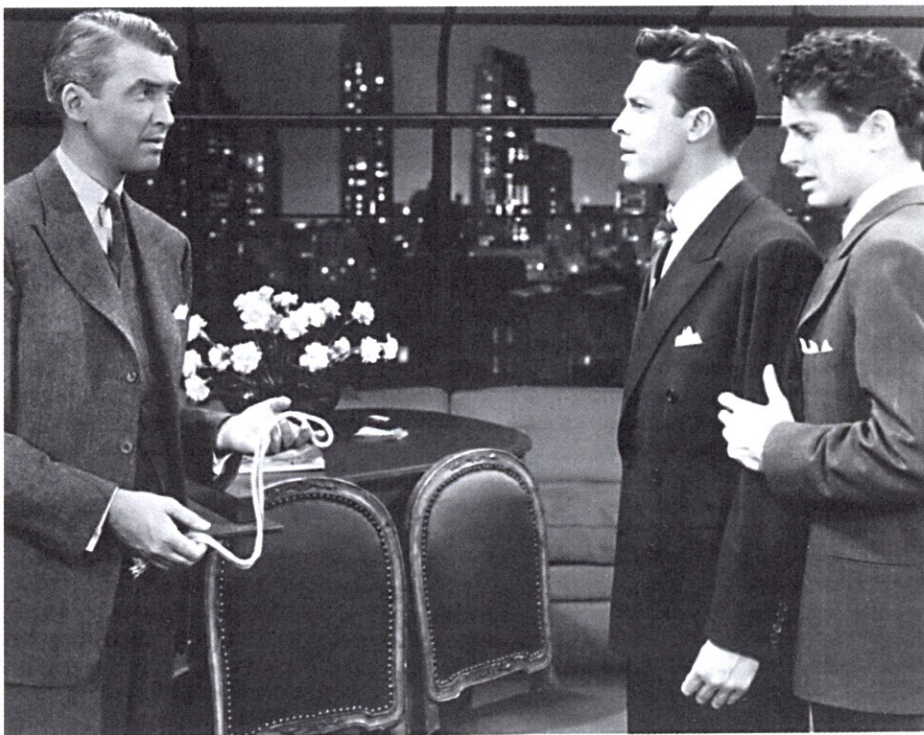
The film's most subversive strategy is to use the domestic sphere to invert the gender power structures and roles within the court. The entire plot originates from Mrs. Paradine's murder within the home of her husband, whose already castrated status was symbolized by his blindness and dependency upon her to act as 'his eyes'. During the Keane couple's first encounter at their home, furthermore, Gay is shown temporarily 'blinding' Keane with a towel whilst vigorously drying his hair, the effect of which is to undercut her rather excessive, overblown praise of him by suggesting an unconscious wish to disempower her husband too (that Mrs. Paradine represents Gay's repressed, transgressive side is further suggested via the zoom-in from the latter's point of view to her 'adversary' in the witness box during a later scene). On returning home from Horfield's dinner party, moreover, it is Gay who assumes the active role of 'prosecutor' by interrogating her husband's motives for wanting to switch their honeymoon venue to Italy (the country of Mrs. Paradine's birth). Her mockery of him for being 'so transparent—and for such a devious kind of barrister too' in turn prompts Keane to remark: 'Come on, tell the jury what's on your mind.' After finally confronting Keane about his infatuation with Mrs. Paradine on a later occasion, Gay reflects with some surprise upon her own newly discovered powers of rhetoric: 'There, I've made my speech. What a speech. That's what comes of being married to a lawyer.' At Sir Simon's home, too, it is his

daughter Judy who displays a similar legal disposition (while her dark, upswept hair, long black dresses and piano playing also link her to Mrs. Paradine). Thus, she speculates (quite accurately) upon Keane's possible motives for wanting to visit Hindley Hall (prompting her father to wonder where she acquired 'this decidedly unfeminine interest in things'), while her questioning of Sir Simon provokes him to respond tetchily: 'I'll not be made a hostile witness by my own flesh and blood.'

But it is the Horfield home which the film uses as the location for its strongest critique. During the dinner party, for example, the film exploits Horfield's own action of banishing his wife and



Strangers on a Train



Rope



The Paradine Case: the arrest of Mrs. Paradine.

female guests from the room so as to give space and voice to Sophie's own concerns about her husband. Her fearful, uncompleted admission to Gay that she dreads it when Horfield has to take a murder trial (as 'He comes home looking so ...') gestures towards the possibility that the judge may even vent his frustrations upon his wife in the form of physical violence. The chilling depiction of Horfield at home in the penultimate scene (where he is shown cracking walnuts after dinner and remarking upon how their convolutions 'resemble those of the human brain', before visibly frightening Sophie with his dispassionate announcement that he has already sentenced Mrs. Paradine to death) suggests that the reverse of this may also apply: namely, that the courtroom may provide an indirect outlet for his resentment towards his wife. The result, then, is a quite damning critique of patriarchal law, the enactment of which appears, on the one hand, to bring out implied criminal tendencies in its key representative and, on the other, to provide an indirect outlet for his misogyny in the form of a legalized killing of women. The female characters' tendency within the home to assume the role of interrogator cum prosecutor towards their male authority figures can, thus, be seen as consistent with the film's overall strategy of using the domestic space to invert the legal and gender status quo within the narrative by

placing patriarchy itself and the enactors of its laws 'on trial'. The foregrounding of the court-room door during the opening and closing title sequences symbolically encloses the film's entire narrative world within a superior judicial framework, during the process of which the spectator (as its implied jury) is invited to interpret, evaluate and make critical judgements upon its governing institutions and structures of power.

Objects

The earlier discussion of the compass in *Lifeboat* also served to highlight the crucial role played by objects in Hitchcock's films. The fact that this important visual feature has received little in-depth critical attention may be due partly to the director's own fondness for stressing the role of the "MacGuffin", as that object (or goal) of vital importance to the characters but of little interest to either himself or the audience (except as a device to get the plot going). Hitchcock's emphasis upon the McGuffin may, in a sense, be the greater red herring, given the way that it diverts attention away from a very real textual dependency upon objects as a means for establishing and controlling our point of view. So while in *Notorious* it is the uranium ore which is supposedly the ultimate target of the characters' interest, it is the intermediary objects used

to obtain and hide it that become the film's real source of interest (the means thereby becoming an end in themselves). That such an interest cannot be explained simply in terms of more general generic conventions pertaining to the thriller and film noir is evident when one compares other films in the same field. In *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston, 1941), for example, the characters' obsession with the statue drives the plot forward but is not given the same rhetorical weighting by the text itself as that ascribed to the compass in *Lifeboat*. Even Lang, whose thematic affinities with Hitchcock extend to a comparable recognition of the filmic usefulness of objects—particularly in highlighting the processes and limitations of perception and the attendant deceptiveness and malleability of the surface narrative worlds—differs markedly in the nature and extent of the role that he assigns to objects. Hence, while a cigarette lighter serves strikingly similar plot functions in both *Beyond A Reasonable Doubt* (1956) and *Strangers On A Train* (1951) (namely to incriminate the male protagonist in the murder of his wife by being planted at the scene of the crime and, in doing so, highlight the unreliability of circumstantial evidence), in the Hitchcock film it fulfils a more complex narrational role. This culminates in the memorable sequence where Bruno drops the lighter down a drain on his way back to the murder site: in drawing us into his frantic attempts to retrieve this lost object, the film in turn implicates us in the villain's ultimate goal of using it to incriminate Guy.

The fact that many of the following examples of objects in Hitchcock's films were initially recalled from memory is testimony to their centrality in shaping our visual perspective upon the narrative worlds: both during the viewing process and afterwards when, given the way that memory often tends to work in relation to films (as with the world outside) according to images and detail rather than linearity, such objects seem to assume even greater weight. Certain recurring patterns also tend to emerge. In the first place, objects often fall into recognisable types: keys; rings and other jewellery; food; bottles and glasses; cameras; spectacles; bodies; newspapers; knives and other sharp instruments. In addition, such objects frequently participate in wider narrative processes of substitution and replacement. In *Lifeboat*, for example, the rhetorical emphasis shifts from the compass to the water bottle while in *Notorious* it moves from the key and wine bottle(s) to the coffee cup. While both films display an overall narrative dependency upon objects, moreover, it is one particular object that tends to assume privileged status at any given time. So, whereas the characters in *Lifeboat* strive unsuccessfully to hang on to their various possessions, they lack access, in turn, to the two objects (the compass and water bottle) most necessary for their survival. In view of its particularly important role as a visual pun on filmic direction, the compass in fact qualifies as the overall 'meta' object in Hitchcock's films, typifying the way in which objects can serve to shape and alter the course of a narrative, the characters' destinies and our own relationship to a film world. In the latter respect, the compass functions primarily to regulate the epistemic flow between ourselves and the characters, acting as a device for privileging us with crucial narrative information that the American crew members lack while simultaneously placing us in an uncomfortable alliance with the villain.

During the party sequence in *Notorious*, our shifting alignment with the three main characters (not to mention the changing balance of power between them) are managed through a corresponding transfer in ownership of the wine cellar key: from Alicia during the first stage of the party, to Devlin during his search of the wine cellar, and, finally, to Alex from the point where he discovers that the key is missing to his discovery of its return. While it would be over-simplistic to state that the key effects a transfer in identification from Alicia to Alex by the end of the sequence (as Alex's discovery of its theft clearly serves in one important respect to heighten our anxiety for Alicia), nevertheless, in privileging us with

knowledge of his investigations the film distances us epistemically from her while also allowing a substantial sympathy to develop for Alex as we witness his sense of betrayal and impending danger. A more clear-cut case occurs in *Rope* (1948) where Rupert's discovery of the murdered man's hat in Brandon's and Philip's apartment acts as the main fulcrum or turning-point for what Victor Perkins refers to as the 'transference of identification' that takes place from the two murderers to the investigating professor (see Perkins, *Film As Film: Understanding and Judging Movies*, Penguin Books, London, 1991, p.143). Similarly, in *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) the newspaper article about the 'Merry Widow Murderer' functions so as to involve us first with Uncle Charlie's attempts to conceal his secret from his sister's family (through the film's strategy of letting us in on the motive behind his elaborate paper folding trick) and then with Charlie as we share her discovery of its contents during the scene in the library. Alicia's discovery of the significance of the coffee cup at a later point in *Notorious* also serves to bring her back into a much closer relationship with the audience, triggering, as it does, the ensuing series of highly subjective shots from her point of view.

Sallitt's own view that objects are symptomatic of an overall restricted viewpoint in Hitchcock's films does, despite its validity in certain cases, require substantial qualification. For, in many of the examples cited earlier, objects act both as an important source of privileged information for us, the audience (during which time they usually assume their greatest rhetorical weighting), and as a means whereby characters often discover what we already know (at which point such objects usually recede from view). Further comparison between Hitchcock and Lang is helpful here for it highlights the way in which objects in the former generally tend to clarify, expand and reveal whereas in the latter they disorientate, constrict and ambiguate: contrast, for example, the use of the hat in *Rope* with its equivalent in *You Only Live Once* (1937), and the newspaper in *Shadow Of A Doubt* with its counterparts in both the same Lang film and *Beyond A Reasonable Doubt*. Even in the crofters' scene in *The 39 Steps*, where a newspaper article incriminates an innocent rather than guilty man, the film's emphasis is less upon the unreliability of the article itself (as might be expected if it were a Lang film) than upon its narrational role in drawing us into Hannay's attempts to both see and conceal the article from the couple. One significant area where Hitchcock and Lang do converge in their use of objects is when privileging us with clues to a character's hidden motives. Thus, the dropping or planting of the male protagonist's cigarette lighter (a present from his fiancée) at the murder scene in *Strangers On A Train* (1951) and *Beyond A Reasonable Doubt* can be variously construed in both cases as a symbolic acknowledgement of his unconscious desire to be rid of his wife or would-be-wife. A gender reversal of this occurs in *Rear Window* where Lisa's flaunting of the ring in Thorwald's apartment signifies, in directing the murderer's gaze across the courtyard, her unconscious desire to expose and endanger Jeffries in revenge for his refusal to marry her. In *Rope*, this psychoanalytic dimension to objects is even voiced quite self-consciously by Rupert when he refers to the cigarette case that he pretends to have left behind as a pretext for regaining entry into the apartment: 'I suppose a psychoanalyst would say that I didn't really forget it at all. I unconsciously left it because I wanted to come back'.

Brandon's earlier 'oversight' in leaving David Kentley's initial hat in the closet for Rupert to discover similarly suggests his own unconscious wish to have the murder acknowledged, while in *Vertigo* Judy's 'mistake' in wearing Madeleine's necklace also implies an analogous desire on her part to bring the whole plot out into the open. The real relevance of Sallitt's notion of intrarealism with regard to objects would therefore seem to lie less in its concern with restricted viewpoint and much more in its emphasis upon direct involvement, as objects provide one very clear instance of how Hitchcock's films allow us access to their narrative

worlds in ways that are not necessarily character dependent. Even where objects serve to make us worry for characters or, as in the above examples, provide insight into their hidden motives, the fact that such effects are being achieved via these indirect, inanimate means is in itself indicative of a less than complete involvement with the characters themselves. So, while in *Notorious* the camera's strategy of foregrounding the coffee cup's dangerous nature serves to create much audience anxiety for Alicia, it also inevitably produces an epistemic and spatial barrier to full identification, with its physical dominance in the foreground of one repeated shot just prior to her discovery that she is being poisoned even threatening to displace her as the centre of perspective in the frame. Similarly, during the sequence in *Suspicion* (1941) when Johnnie carries the glass of milk up to Lina, it is the object which becomes our central point of visual orientation and narrative interest. Most radically of all, the money in *Psycho* not only triggers and mediates the more intense phase of our involvement with Marion (from the shot of it lying on the bed onwards) but also eventually fills the vacuum created by her sudden murder, before then going on to assist in the transfer of our identification to Norman (through a desire, strongly encouraged by the camera's foregrounding strategies, to have him notice it lying on the bedside cabinet).

Whether acquiring a prominence disproportionate to their actual size (as with the coffee cup in *Notorious*), a somewhat incandescent quality (as in the case of the glass of milk in *Suspicion*), or acting as the justification for a progressive narrowing of camera viewpoint, there is a pronounced tendency, then, for certain objects to assume a particular force of attraction amidst the general spatial field of view in Hitchcock's films. It is a tendency that invites comparison with what Roland Barthes refers to as the duality that co-exists in photographs between the 'studium' ('that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of varied interest, of inconsequential taste: I like/I don't like') and the 'punctum', as the detail that, if and when it emerges, has the power to attract and jolt the spectator, thereby transforming and illuminating the way that a photograph is viewed:

The second element will break (or punctuate) the studium. ... A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many points. This second element which will disturb the studium I shall therefore call punctum; for punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) (Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Vintage, London, 1993, pp.26-7).

Many sequences in Hitchcock's films do appear, in fact, to operate precisely on the basis of a tension between the studium and the punctum: between the general and the specific, the far and the near, the public and the private. As such, Barthes' term is helpful for the way that it suggests a very precise meaning to the term 'point of view'. For our access to a more privileged viewpoint in Hitchcock's films often depends upon an ability to transcend the studium by finding the punctum (as that object or other point of detail which, on being discovered, results in a moment of revelation or clarification).

In certain respects, though, Barthes' notion of the punctum as accidental, disruptive, able to by-pass intellectual analysis and culturally acquired modes of thinking would appear very much at odds with the sense one gains in Hitchcock's films of objects being employed quite purposefully as ways of guiding us towards a deeper understanding of the narrative worlds. Barthes himself, in his brief comparison between still photographs and cinema, regards

the punctum as not only impossible in the latter (due to the moving images not allowing sufficient time for it to emerge) but also unnecessary. The punctum's metonymic 'power of expansion' (Barthes, p.45) is essentially a means whereby the photograph (with its limitations of stasis and fixity) is able to both evoke and compensate for that sense of an unseen, wider field operating beyond the frame that is already inherent in movies. Indeed, in strictly spatial terms, objects in Hitchcock's films often perform an inverse role to the photographic punctum by providing us with a point of stability, a concrete anchorage or hold upon these narrative worlds, as an antidote both to the film medium's ceaseless flow of images and those more severe uncertainties and disruptions specific to the Hitchcock thriller. Thus, after the shower murder in *Psycho*, it is the money wrapped up in newspaper which becomes the only concrete rung and remnant from the earlier narrative that we have to cling onto. The spatial stability offered by objects can also extend across scenes and characters, often acting as a foundation block for the film's overall architecture. As alluded to earlier, the wine cellar key in *Notorious* acts as a continuity device throughout the main party sequence, with Alicia's theft of the key prior to the party even being mirrored later on by Alex's discovery of its absence and subsequent return. In addition to the key, the broken wine bottle also links together Devlin's and Alex's explorations of the wine cellar as they both attempt to discover what each of them has tried to conceal. Objects can even provide structuring links across films—as in the case of the hangover cure brought to Alicia by Devlin, the effect of which seems designed quite clearly to recall the glass of milk that the Cary Grant character carries up to Lina in *Suspicion*.

Yet despite their more stabilising function, objects also consistently demonstrate the validity of a cinematic equivalent of the Barthesian punctum. A closer spatial correlative for the latter can be found in *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) where the appearance of the word 'FROY' on the train window is not highlighted via the more characteristic camera track-in device but remains in the background of a long static shot as Gilbert and Iris sit down to tea in the dining carriage: the effect of such a strategy is to place the onus upon us to seek out the significant data for ourselves. The fleeting appearance of the Harriman's Herbal tea packet label later on, as it sticks momentarily onto the train window during the throwing out of the rubbish, also provides an exemplary instance of where Hitchcock's films exploit the temporality of the cinema medium—the very fact that things cannot be pinned down as in a still photograph—by investing one of its key objects with the punctum's quality of transience (rather than stability). In doing so, the incident displays what Leo Braudy refers to as 'the centrifugal force of objects, their escapability' which 'may at any moment vanish or extend themselves into the life beyond the frame' (Braudy, *The World In A Frame: What We See In Films*, University of Chicago Press, London, 1984, pp.76-7).

Hitchcock's films also push Barthes' main notion of the punctum as a 'wound', a 'mark made by a pointed instrument', to its most intense extreme via their foregrounding of knives and other weapons of assault: most traumatically of all, of course, with each stab of the knife during the shower murder in *Psycho*. Here, though, the punctum object's wounding power is conveyed as much aurally as visually via the punctuating of the soundtrack with the bird-like shrieks of the violins. The possibility of an aural punctum was explored as early as *Blackmail* (1929) when Alice's traumatized state after stabbing her would-be rapist to death using a breadknife is conveyed at the breakfast table the next morning via an expressionistic distortion and disturbance of the soundtrack. There, the aural studium or general field of sounds (consisting of a neighbour's gossip about the murder) is gradually eliminated whilst the word "knife" becomes louder and increasingly insistent.

For Barthes, another feature of the photographic punctum is its ability to evoke the pathos of what he refers to as the 'noeme' or 'that-has-been' (p.96), a sense evoked for him personally by the

discovery of a photograph of his own dead mother. Although Barthes dismisses the possibility of such a punctum in cinema, it finds its counterpart in the objects which Lila encounters during her search through the Bates house in *Psycho*, the emotional poignancy of which lie in their ability to evoke both Norman's emotionally arrested state and, on subsequent viewings, Mrs. Bates' own past, foreshortened life. The parallel between Lila's attempt to gain a sense of Mrs. Bates via her remaining possessions and Barthes' own search through old photographs in an effort to rediscover the essence of his dead mother is, in fact, quite striking. In both cases, the clues to the mother's real identity are to be found in objects that resist mediation through the son's male discourse (in Barthes' case, by preceding his existence and remembrance of her).

This notion of objects representing 'keys' to a character's lost identity even assumes literal form elsewhere. But in such cases, the inability to find an all-important key (as when Charlie discovers that the ignition key is missing during the second garage scene in *Shadow of a Doubt*), or loss of such a possession (as in Alex's case in *Notorious*), or even voluntary disposal of it (as when Marnie throws her locker key down a drain near the beginning of that film) tend to allude instead to the characters' own inaccess to or denial of their repressed selves. In *Psycho*, Norman's gesture of handing the cabin key to Marion at the very moment when she tries to fake her name in the motel register book points to his ability to force her to confront aspects of herself that she attempts to deny (as indicated later by her decision to return to Phoenix with the stolen money after her encounter with him in the parlour) but any positive potential implied by this is subsequently nullified, of course, by the key's role in leading Marion to a most final obliteration of her identity. Barthes' compensation for his dead mother (as a 'lost object' in the psychoanalytic sense of the term) via an intermediary, substitute object also finds a monstrous analogy in Norman's attempt to hold onto his mother by preserving her corpse (rather than just her possessions). A rather more positive version of this strategy can be found in *Marnie* (1964) where the female protagonist's attachment to her horse Forio (as a living, responsive animal quite different from the inanimate objects mentioned earlier) compensates for her emotionally thwarted relationship with her mother (who in turn uses the girl Jessie as a substitute for her own daughter). Indeed, Forio's accidental death near the end of the film provides one of the most traumatic, complex workings through of a character's over-attachment to a substitute love object. What it performs, in fact, is a rather ambivalent, conflated re-enactment of the previously repressed incident in Marnie's childhood, one that involved both the laming of her mother and Marnie's own killing of the sailor. Moreover, in view of the parallel implied here between Forio and Bernice (a link strengthened elsewhere by the mother's own evasive references to her 'bad accident'), Marnie's shooting of the horse becomes not only a reenactment of the past but also a symbolic 'killing off' of the maternal figure in the present in order to replace her with Mark as the new, now romantic object of attachment.

Crucially, too, it is objects which often become the focal points of the suspense in Hitchcock's work, their capacity for yielding privileged information often serving to generate or heighten, rather than ease, audience anxieties. During the party scene in *Notorious*, the suspense is structured both globally upon the overall enigma surrounding the mysterious contents of the wine bottle(s) and Alex's possible discovery of the stolen key and locally upon the following series of specific questions relating to these objects:

- Will Alex appear in time to see Alicia stealing the key from his chain? (No)
- Will Alex discover the key in her hand? (No)
- Will the supply of champagne bottles run out? (Yes, after the

third shot of it from Joseph's POV)

- Will Devlin see the bottle in time to catch it before it falls from the wine cellar shelf? (No)
- Will Alex discover the missing key on his way to the wine cellar and, consequently, the real meaning of Alicia and Devlin's kiss on the porch? (Yes)
- Will Alex discover the odd wine bottle bearing the wrong vintage year and the broken original hidden under the shelves? (Yes)
- Will Alex discover the return of the wine cellar key (and thereby obtain concrete proof of his wife's betrayal)? (Yes)

Alex's discovery of the theft and subsequent return of the wine cellar key marks both the conclusion of this suspense situation and the beginning of another based upon his poisoning of Alicia: the question 'Will Alex find out?' is therefore replaced by 'Will Alicia find out?' and is accompanied by the emergence of the coffee cup as the new object of interest and anxiety. In ways analogous to, but more coherent than, Freudian dream-work, therefore, such objects become sites of condensation, charged with suspense and multiple meanings which are projected onto them to such an extent that they 'gather significance the way snowballs grow when they roll down hills, by the repetition, accumulation, and mere persistence in our eyes' (Braudy, p.37). Wine bottles and coffee cups thus act not only as literal receptacles for hidden, potentially dangerous secrets and substances but also as symbolic containers for our own suspense-related anxieties. The glass of milk which Johnnie carries up to Lina in *Suspicion* is another such example, except that the object here displays a Barthesian resistance to analysis by refusing to yield up its meaning. Yet while the uncertainty over whether or not this glass of milk contains poison does complicate the clarificatory role more typically performed by objects in Hitchcock's films, it is an ambiguity that nevertheless remains distinct from the kind associated with their counterpart in Lang's films. For whereas a Langian object tends to reinforce the arbitrariness of the meanings projected onto it, the punctum object in Hitchcock is invariably charged with significance: any variability instead lies in the extent to which its secrets are revealed. The closest approximation to a Langian use of an object in Hitchcock's work occurs in *Secret Agent* (1936), where the British characters murder an innocent man almost solely on the tenuous basis of a single button found in another murdered man's hand and which they wrongly attribute to the German character Caypor. Yet even here it is the characters who invest the object with significance rather than the film itself, which does not endow it with the kind of visual weighting characteristically given to objects elsewhere. Not, that is, until the characters discover their mistake, whereupon the film provides a subjective, hallucinatory image of a montage of buttons from Elsa's point of view, the effect of which is to emphasize the commonality of this object instead.

By virtue of their multi-functionality, then, objects offer us an extremely tangible, highly condensed illustration of the overall complexity of point of view in Hitchcock's films. Indeed, the sense of ambivalence that we tend to associate with watching a Hitchcock film is traceable in no small part to the punctum object's paradoxical role: to the fact that, in films such as *Sabotage* (1936), *Suspicion* and *Notorious*, it is the most visually threatening, suspense-laden objects (in the form of the bomb package, the glass of milk and the coffee cup) which serve, simultaneously and contradictorily, as the very means by which we are able to retain a spatial and epistemic hold upon the narrative world.

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Travels With My Aunt: Romanticism and Aging

by Richard Lippe



As anyone knows who is familiar with Cukor's career, *Travels With My Aunt* was intended to be a vehicle for Katharine Hepburn, who left the project at a late date. Hepburn was dismissed when she refused to agree to the production date the studio imposed on the project but, according to Patrick McGilligan, the real issue surrounding the firing is to be found in Jay Presson Allen's claim that Hepburn didn't want to do the film in the first place. McGilligan quotes Allen, who with Hugh Wheeler receives script credit for the film, as saying that Hepburn, after the critical and commercial disaster of *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (1969), didn't want to play another eccentric old woman and that the actor, perhaps unconsciously, began to find fault with the script as a means to reject the project. Allen also says that Hepburn, at her suggestion, began rewriting the script and the final version owes much to Hepburn's input. Allen goes as far as claiming that Hepburn is primarily responsible for the script but says the actor couldn't receive credit because she didn't belong to the writers' union. Whether or not Allen's story regarding Hepburn's resistance to playing Aunt Augusta is as relevant as McGilligan suggests, there is a general consensus among Cukor critics who have looked into the facts surrounding the film's preproduction that Hepburn made a substantial contribution to the script.

Cukor, threatening to abandon the project when Hepburn was dismissed, stayed on at her insistence and quickly decided on Maggie Smith as a replacement. Hence, *Travels With My Aunt* had a crucial casting change which has affected its reception by the critics and possibly the public. As for the critics, the responses to Smith's casting tended to be a) the film needs Hepburn's presence if it is to fully succeed or b) the actress does irrevocable damage to the film. Smith has been criticized for being too young to play the role and resorting to heavy make-up to look the part of a seventy year old and/or for overacting, relying on 'technical tricks' to create her characterization. The dissatisfaction with Smith's casting has caused an ongoing controversy regarding the success of the film. This controversy includes a third position—the film is one of Cukor's most accomplished works and Smith's performance deserves the Academy Award nomination it received. The last is the position that I hold. Cukor's decision to cast Smith was a daring choice. According to Emanuel Levy, Angela Lansbury was briefly considered; she is a more likely candidate for the role, but

perhaps she was rejected because of her association with the stage version of *Mame*. Cukor has stated that he didn't want *Travels With My Aunt* to be taken as a reworking of *Mame*. Also, Lansbury had recently appeared in *Something for Everyone* (1970) a black comedy in which she played an aging, impoverished aristocrat. While that film's subject matter has no direct connection to *Travels With My Aunt*, it may have seemed at the time that the critics would accuse Lansbury of reprising her *Something for Everyone* performance. In any case, there are several reasons why Smith is a good choice. Smith, because of her youth, was able to play the character as a young woman in the flashbacks. These sequences are crucial to the film's presentation of Augusta, her attitude towards her lover, Visconti/Robert Stephens, and the other men in her life who are given representative presentation through the character of Dambreuse/Jose Luis Lopez Vazquez. (The casting of Hepburn or Lansbury would have necessitated a young actress playing Augusta in the flashbacks. This would have disrupted the emotional continuity the film builds in the telling of Augusta's story which involves the relation between past and present, youth and age.) Smith, like Hepburn and Lansbury, is accomplished as both a comedienne and a dramatic actress. In regard to the comic mode, Smith's performance relates to the tradition of the British comedienne as a farceur. The tradition includes Beatrice Lillie and Kay Kendall and it is possible to detect a trace of Kendall's drunken escapades from *Les Girls* in Smith's more animated moments in *Travels With My Aunt*; but, like Kendall, Smith is capable of humanizing her characterization. Smith's Aunt Augusta isn't simply a caricature. If *Travels With My Aunt* is to be effective as a statement on human relations, it depends in great part on Augusta's range, and Smith is extremely successful in making Augusta a woman who is a vibrant human being. Her vibrancy and its possible extinction are what is at stake in the last third of the film, and it is her regeneration that contributes to the film's upbeat conclusion. And, from another perspective, Smith, with the help of Cukor's delicate handling of emotional tonal changes, manages to go directly from playing broad comedy to a tender, intimate love scene. This occurs in the bordello sequence, which begins as a comic episode but abruptly shifts, when Augusta discovers Visconti's presence, into a sensual, romantic encounter.

Maggie Smith's performance is highly theatrical, but then so is



Travels With My Aunt: Augusta (Maggie Smith) and Henry (Alec McCowan) embark on an adventure

the character she plays. Augusta's theatricality is conveyed through her gestures, responses and attitude. Clearly, Cukor was sensitive of the degree to which Smith's performance is pitched to a flamboyant level; the character's theatrical presence is reinforced by her visual appearance—the shockingly red hair and the array of colourful and highly individualized outfits, the most spectacular being a wonderfully brilliant scarlet red coat and hat. (The color red is used throughout. Its usage ranges from Augusta's clothes to an exterior long shot—an image of the Orient Express travelling through a grim-looking countryside is beautified by a field of red poppies in the foreground.) In interior shots set in London and Paris, Cukor often fills a part of the screen with splashes of colour or patterns and textures which place Augusta in an environment that is visually heightened and functions to reflect and enhance her identity. These images are highly composed and elegant. They speak of a woman who has a love of excess but who is imaginative and creative. The association of the theatrical with Augusta is introduced in her first appearance in the film and systematically developed through her quest to save Visconti's life. The quest becomes a journey which leads to a series of adventures that take unexpected twists and turns and culminate in a complete reversal of expectations regarding Visconti and his situation. Visconti, himself a theatrical character, has staged his own kidnapping. He provides an additional melodramatic flourish by having himself wheeled out by his henchmen with his head and fingers bandaged, only to reveal to Augusta that his story of being kidnapped and tortured for ransom was a pretense.

Like the stylized images associated with Augusta in the present, each of the three flashbacks is designed in a different visual manner which works to illustrate Augusta's emotional memory and suggests her creative interpretation of the experience. In the first flashback, which takes place in the Gare de Lyon, Augusta recalls her initial meeting with Visconti and the impact it had on her life. The sequence is preceded by Augusta pointing out to her nephew Henry/Alec McCowan the beauty of the train station's interior and its ability to inspire the imagination. Those comments lead to her recollection of Visconti who, inside the station at a window, beckons her, a teenaged schoolgirl travelling under supervision with other young women her age, to join him. Visconti is jokingly offering the invitation but, to his surprise, Augusta suddenly appears in

the room and he sweeps her into his arms and they begin to dance. The romantic connotations of the encounter are heightened as Visconti begins serenading Augusta singing the words to the love song that is being played. In Augusta's memory, the event is purely a romantic moment with Visconti as a kind of Prince Charming who rescues her from the regimentation and repression of her middle-class schoolgirl existence. But, as Augusta's introductory comments to the flashback indicate, Visconti also introduces her to the sensual aspects of the world. The first flashback is constructed as a storybook romance with Augusta as its heroine, and Cukor's visuals reflect a lush, delicate experience. In the second flashback, Augusta, now an adult woman working in a bordello, projects assurance and sophistication. The *mise-en-scene* conveys the change in Augusta's life and identity: the colours are no longer pastel and Augusta's movements within the frame are somewhat mechanical. The flashback's tone drastically changes when Visconti makes an unexpected appearance—when Augusta and Visconti are reunited, the mood is erotic and sensual as he splashes water on her face, washing off the make-up and showering her now naked face with kisses. The scene's low-key lighting reinforces the fact that innocence and romance have been replaced by passion and sexual hunger. In the second flashback, Augusta's memory produces an environment that is worldly and, when she is with Visconti, tender and erotically charged.

In contrast, the third flashback, which is centred on her role as a mistress to the wealthy diplomat Dambreuse, while implying a strong sexual charge, lacks the seductive, romantic intensity of the first two flashbacks. In this segment, Cukor suggests a comedy of errors between the lovers. The languor of the second flashback is replaced by a hectic pacing which leads to a comic disaster when Dambreuse is exposed as having, in addition to a wife and six children, another mistress. In the Visconti flashbacks, Augusta envisions a love affair; with Dambreuse, she remembers affectionately pleasurable moments of playfulness and a friendship.

Travels With My Aunt is one of Cukor's most beautifully designed, visually rich and sensual films and, as such, recalls the Hoyningen-Huene collaborations. Cukor and his production designer, John Box, seamlessly integrate the interior and exterior footage to bring a high degree of stylization to the film. On the other hand, *Travels With My Aunt*, which could have been conceived along the lines of a fairytale or fable and given a fey quality, is presented as a reflection of an actual lived experience. In having the film move beyond the sentimental and reassuring, Cukor challenges easy generic classification. In fact, *Travels With My Aunt* allows for various identifications—it can be labelled a black or romantic comedy. I would also suggest it belongs to the tradition of the screwball comedy having a thematic that is similar to Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby*. In both films a conservative thinking, physically inhibited and emotionally repressed man is, through an unexpected encounter, thrown into a journey situation with a woman who is his opposite; and, in the course of their travels/adventures, the two learn to enjoy each other and gain from the experience. Just as the liberation of Cary Grant's David is a central aspect of *Bringing Up Baby*, the broadening of Henry's identity and imagination is a project of *Travels With My Aunt*. The two films are interesting to compare in regard to how they respectively relate this issue of identity and change to gender concerns. In Hawks's film, David is initially aligned with masculinist thinking through his commitment to the world of science, academia and capitalism—the latter providing the means to sustain his career interests. In Cukor's film, Henry's profession, banking, connects him with a male-dominated institution, but he is also, and significantly, aligned to a female arena—the home, gardening and flowers. In *Bringing Up Baby*, Katharine Hepburn's Susan is primarily defined by her playfulness, irrationality and indifference to authority, bourgeois convention and capitalist values. Like Hawks's heroine, Aunt Augusta represents a kind of life-force rejecting the social

constraints imposed on women by the dominant ideology, but she has, like Henry, contradictory traits. Early on in the film, Augusta tells Henry that one of men's best qualities is that they are a 'bit of the hound'. For Augusta, being a 'bit of the hound' is defying conventions and transgressing—it also seems to include an acceptance of dishonest, self-serving and irresponsible behaviour from her lover(s). As Augusta recollects her relationship with Visconti, it becomes clear that he has from early on exploited her and doesn't deserve the commitment she has made to him. Yet she continues to maintain that, despite his insensitivity to and abandonment of her, he is worthy of her love and devotion. On a less personally meaningful level, she treats Dambreuse's dishonesty—the fact that he hasn't told her about his other mistress—as a joke. While her refusal to take his deception seriously may be prompted by her amusement that he was deceiving both his wife and herself, it also bespeaks the masculinist attitude she has internalized and directed towards herself and others. Augusta doesn't see that what she in part admires in men is, in fact, behaviour based on male privilege. In *Bringing Up Baby*, the Grant and Hepburn characters, as Andrew Britton argues in 'Cary Grant: Comedy and Male Desire', move towards equality in the relationship; Grant, during his time with Susan, sheds his masculinist identity and learns to appreciate Susan's persona and what it offers. Additionally, the two fall in love and construct a heterosexual couple that can be read as an alternative to the conventional male-female filmic couple whose function is to reinforce clearly defined gender-role definitions. In contrast, Aunt Augusta and her nephew (or possibly son), Henry, aren't bound to the conventions found in Hawks's film; as a consequence, Cukor's characters function somewhat differently. Yet they too are conceived to challenge, unsettle and problematize gender-role expectations. While it is obvious that Augusta's function is to liberate Henry from his dull and conservative existence, she is, as I have suggested, geared to masculinist thinking. For instance, when Dambreuse's abrupt death seemingly cuts off Augusta's last chance to raise the ransom money needed to rescue Visconti, she justifies stealing a Modigliani painting in his wife's possession by claiming that she posed for the work. Significantly, it is Augusta's theft of the painting that precipitates her confrontation with Henry. The argument isn't about the theft itself: Henry's refusal to condone stealing isn't simply an instance of middle class morality. Rather, it is prompted by his recognition that he can no longer be complicit with Augusta's opportunistic and obsessive behaviour. Instead, he is demanding that Augusta look beyond her needs and single-minded commitment to Visconti and acknowledge that she has responsibilities to others including himself. He wants her to fully recognize that they have a relationship, which entails her consideration of his values and presence in the mission they have undertaken together. Henry's demand for recognition and respect isn't prompted by gender concerns—a desire to be the dominant partner. Yet, given the film's play with gender and behaviour, his demand can be read as a rejection of a masculine identity role if the image is defined by what Augusta currently represents. *Travels With My Aunt* isn't *Bringing Up Baby* in that it reinvents the heterosexual couple in terms of a radical rejection of gender norms. Nevertheless, Cukor's film offers a strong critique of masculinist thinking and behaviour; the aftermath of the confrontation results in a greater equality between the two, with each gaining a better understanding of the other's strengths and weaknesses.

As the film's title indicates, *Travels With My Aunt* is a story about Henry Pulling's experiences. The title suggests that a boy or young man is telling the story but, in actuality, Henry is a middle-aged bachelor who has sheltered himself from the world that exists beyond his daily routines. Henry's encounter with Augusta initiates an education which expands his experience and perception. An aspect of Henry's growth is his relationship with Tooley/Cindy Williams, the young hippie-like American woman touring Europe. She introduces Henry to marijuana but, more significantly, Tooley

seduces him—and, the film implies, he is a virgin. Cukor doesn't depict Henry and Tooley having sex; arguably, he doesn't because the film isn't primarily about Henry's sex life and because the experience is only an aspect of Henry's evolution. The sexual encounter with Tooley is as much an instance of Henry's emerging ability to give himself to others as it is an establishing of an adult sexual identity. Henry is in the processing of becoming a more confident person, who gradually begins to assert himself with Augusta and her attempts to direct his life.

From the outset, *Travels With My Aunt* is narratively shaped by Augusta's goal to deliver the ransom money. When Visconti reveals that his kidnapping was a hoax, Augusta is confronted by his betrayal and the realization devastates her. Augusta begins to despair about herself and whatever future she has believing that Visconti, in addition to lying to her, has absconded with the money she delivered. It is at this point that Henry reveals that he, like his possible father, Visconti, is also capable of bringing off a deception; he informs Augusta that most of the money is still in their possession—what Visconti took with him was mainly telephone pages cut to the size of dollar bills. The revelation not only illustrates Henry's newly gained willingness to be 'flexible' about life's experiences, it also indicates his genuine commitment to Augusta. In turn, this leads to the question of whether they have a future together and, if so, who or what will shape it? Henry suggests the toss of a coin—their future will depend on chance. Of course, Henry, in making the suggestion, is acknowledging implicitly that they will have a future together and that it will be open-ended, an adventure. Hence, the film ends happily. In the Hollywood cinema, the 'happy ending' is often aligned with a return to stability and 'normality' with the hero saying to the heroine 'let's go home'. Here, as so frequently happens in Cukor's films, *Holiday*, *Heller in Pink Tights*, *Rich and Famous* among others, the 'couple' are starting anew but there is no prescription for their future. Again, Cukor's work relates to Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby* where there is a refusal to place the couple at the film's conclusion within the confines of societal regulation. Cukor's work is also similar to Hawks's in that both directors tend to place more emphasis on their actors and the interaction between the actors/characters than they do on the primacy of the thematic. These directors, in contrast to such filmmakers as Ford and Capra who construct their films around a very specific set of thematic concerns, are less concerned with the 'overt' statement their films are making. This isn't to say that Hawks and Cukor don't communicate a personal vision of human experience. As numerous critics have discussed, Hawks's films are often concerned with male bonding and the importance of living a life that is based on self-respect, integrity and a personal morality; Cukor's films are also very consistent in their approach to living—his characters are invariably strong, resilient and willing to explore their own potential, taking a chance on what the future will bring. Cukor isn't a simple optimist—in many of the films, the characters confront emotionally painful experiences and suffer significant losses in their lives. Yet, his characters manage to survive these setbacks and, in part, do so because of their innate intelligence, creativity and sense of adventure. Many critics have noted that Cukor's film departs from the Graham Greene book, particularly in its ending; Greene's narrative resolution is much bleaker and more grotesque. Cukor, in contrast, rejects the downbeat ending; instead, he gives his characters a chance to further develop their identities and a potential to enjoy living their lives.

Travels With My Aunt is centrally concerned with Augusta as a romantic. On the one hand, she seems to want to deny her romanticism, presenting herself as a 'realist' who faces life head-on. Yet her commitment to Visconti and the image she has created of him is very romantic. Augusta's romanticism has kept her from becoming a totally cynical and manipulative person; one of the cruelties depicted in Augusta's confrontation with Visconti is that he has exploited that romanticism and, more so, that he doesn't mind

destroying it. In *Travels With My Aunt*, Cukor isn't suggesting that Augusta's romanticism is self-destructive—so much of what makes her appealing is based on her identity as a romantic. Augusta is one of the numerous romantics found in Cukor's films. These characters are diverse, ranging from Katharine Hepburn's idealization of her sister in *Holiday* to Jacqueline Bisset's romantic image of what constitutes a serious writer in *Rich and Famous*. The films don't reject their characters' romanticism, but they illustrate how a romanticizing of a person or a concept can be self-denying and potentially disastrous. Arguably, Cukor doesn't reject his romanticism because he himself is a romantic when it comes to believing in oneself and having ideals and a vision; in the films, an important aspect of these characters is a willingness to fight for what they care about regardless of the consequence. Cukor's films are populated with characters who take risks and being a romantic can be risk-taking; but it is also a part of being open and responsive to the human experience.

In the Cukor cannon, Augusta relates directly to such seemingly diverse female characters as Angie/Sophia Loren in *Heller in Pink Tights* and Ruth/Jean Simmons in *The Actress*. Like these women, Augusta is willing to forfeit public and personal acceptance if it demands a relinquishing of what she wants. And, as with Angie and Ruth, Augusta is a theatrical personage who lives her life as if the world around her is a part of a stage on which she exists; on the other hand, these women aren't unaware of the 'reality' around them. Significantly, Cukor's women never lose their humanity. In *Travels With My Aunt*, for instance, Augusta's immediate rapport with Tooley quickly leads to an almost protective concern for the young woman. There are at least two levels on which the women connect. Firstly, Tooley is what Augusta would have been if she had been a young adult in the 1970s; and secondly, Tooley, like Augusta, is involved, as becomes clear through her conversations with Henry, with a man who treats her unfairly but to whom she is committed nonetheless. From another perspective, it is not without interest that Augusta is comfortable with Tooley and Henry spending time together. In effect, by encouraging Henry to get to know Tooley, Augusta is providing him with an opportunity to know what she was like as a young woman.

Travels With My Aunt is one of Cukor's late theatrical films and it was made at a time when the director was in a vulnerable position. In addition to having lost his star only weeks before filming began, Cukor, according to his biographers, received minimal support from MGM, who provided him with only a small budget for what was a big-scale production. Cukor's career had been at a stand still in part because he was attempting to set up his own production company, and a series of projects that were proposed never materialized. But, more crucially, Cukor, like his contemporaries, was considered an anachronism in the Hollywood cinema of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cukor belonged to the studio-star-genre system that had collapsed by the mid-1960s which was, ironically, the moment when he finally received Academy recognition for his work. While Cukor was attempting to sustain his career, MGM itself was fighting for survival. The studio, once the most prestigious and wealthy, became the most shocking example of the changes that had been taking place in the industry. It was no longer possible for the studios to function as they did during the classical period because of the economic, social and cultural changes that had been instituted in the immediate post-WWII period.

During the 1960s, Hollywood was not only drastically altering its production practices but also the style and content of its product. The full impact of the European cinema began to be felt in the Hollywood of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Suffice it to say, Hollywood needed to prove that it could compete with the changes occurring at large, and an emphasis was placed on new tal-



Visconti (Robert Stephens) romances Augusta (Maggie Smith) in their initial meeting.

ent. Filmmakers like Cukor were suddenly seen as practitioners of an old-fashioned and no longer vital cinema. At best, Cukor was expected to be making a summation statement and, at the time of its release, *Travels With My Aunt*, was read by many critics as his meditation on aging. But, as I have suggested, Cukor's preoccupations in *Travels With My Aunt* are consistent with his earlier works—in this film, Cukor deals with aging but he isn't interested in making it the film's primary thematic. Unlike Capra and Ford, directors whose thematics were greatly affected by the post-WWII environment, Cukor wasn't in a position that either immobilized him (Capra and his populist cinema) or in need of reevaluating what constituted his ideological position and, by extension, his subjective self (Ford and the West).

Cukor and Hepburn planned *Travels With My Aunt* together; the fact that Cukor was involved in a film about a mature adult person was predicated on Hepburn's participation. The same can be said for their two television projects—these works, like *Travels With My Aunt*, deal with the process of aging and its effects. But, arguably, these three films aren't meant to be read as 1) the experience of being old in an ageist society; 2) the insights or lack of them that aging imparts. On the other hand, the works aren't attempts on the director's part to be 'modernist' in content or style. The films are traditionally made when compared to the work being done in Hollywood during this period by younger and more self-conscious filmmakers.

Travels With My Aunt, in an off-hand and playful manner, deals with marijuana and inter-racial sex. Cukor, having a long history of challenging the Production Code, once again offers a more mature and realistic presentation of adult behaviour onscreen. *Travels With My Aunt* wasn't an attempt on Cukor's part to prove that he was 'current'. It is, instead, a film that illustrates that Cukor was as fresh and creative as he had always been.

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The Use of Glass in Alfred Hitchcock's *Blackmail*

by Stephen Brophy

In Alfred Hitchcock's *Blackmail* the protagonist, Alice White, works in a tobacconist's shop run by her family. The shop is a large room at the front of the White house, with a large glass window and an entry directly from the street. To one side of the shop is the family dining and sitting room, divided from the shop by a glass wall, half-curtained. In the shop itself is a telephone booth.

Hitchcock himself grew up in just such an environment, the child of green-grocers. Donald Spoto, in *The Dark Side of Genius*, describes the director's early childhood home in this way:

In 1896 the family moved to 517 The High Road, Leytonstone, leasing the modest premises from a grocer who retired to the quieter Chichester Road. By 1899, when Alfred Joseph was born, the store had been somewhat enlarged and fronted the family quarters: they lived behind and over the crates and shelves of produce, and unless they went around through a back alley to a small rear door, they had to pass through the shop to reach the family rooms. In the middle of a small, dark, and unsuccessful garden was the family outhouse. Privacy was even rarer than silence or sustained sunshine.¹

Critic Robin Wood also grew up in a similar setting, and described the emotional environment in the following terms:

Blackmail was made a year before I was born and is set in a milieu thoroughly and depressingly familiar to me. My parents were antique dealers, hence a few rungs higher in the social scale than tobacconists, to whom they would have condescended, but in terms of sexual mores the differences would be minimal. In the environment in which I grew up all bodily



Alice (Anny Ondra), after stabbing her rapist

functions were regarded as shameful. I was made to feel deeply ashamed of pissing and shitting, and these simple natural functions had to be referred to (if at all, in cases of direst necessity) in whispers, using absurd euphemisms... I never heard the word "sex" spoken within my family ... I developed a vague sense that it was an obscenity, a "dirty word" that must not be uttered and that presumably referred to something even dirtier.²

Alice's family life, as delineated in *Blackmail*, shows no overt signs of such repression. Her father seems more avuncular than paternal, and her mother's parental rigidity is considerably softened by various signs of affection. It is possible that Hitchcock did not allude to these darker underpinnings of Alice's milieu merely because the social conventions of Britain in 1929 would have strongly disapproved. But the sweetness and light of this fishbowl environment also makes an ironic setting for the secret that Alice carries in from her life outside: she has killed a man who was trying to rape her, and fled from the scene of the killing.

All the glass in this environment creates an illusion of openness which contradicts our awareness of Alice's secret. It also serves many other interesting functions, as barriers between various dichotomous qualities, and as screens. Once the viewer becomes aware of the richness of Hitchcock's use of this substance in *Blackmail*, it also becomes more apparent in his other work.

I first noticed his use of glass when I was watching the film, trying to pay particular attention to the various ways he experimented with sound in his first sound movie. Most film directors with established working methods were intimidated by the advent of sound technology, and some even spoke out publicly against it.³

Hitchcock seems to have taken it as another opportunity to develop innovative techniques for his brand of story telling.

His use of a mumbling voice interspersed with sharp ejaculations of the word "knife" to indicate the confused state of mind of Alice on the morning after her misadventure has been widely discussed, as has his restraint in using dialogue in the first reels of the movie. I have not found any mention however of his use of the telephone booth in the shop to modulate the volume of dialogue, or to hint at the secrets being protected, even though it is used as the site of one of the major plot developments—the entrance of the blackmailer—and that use has been carefully prepared by two earlier uses of the booth to stifle sound.

The major use of the booth occurs when Frank, Alice's boyfriend and one of the Scotland Yard detectives assigned to investigate the killing for which Alice is responsible, comes into the shop to talk with Alice. He has found and recognized her glove at the death scene, and also recognized the dead man as the person with whom Alice left a restaurant the night before after a quarrel with Frank. Not feeling free to talk about this before her parents, he asks Alice to join him in the telephone booth.

In the booth he shows her the glove, and she begins to tell him what happened, but they are interrupted by Tracy, the blackmailer, who has come unnoticed into the shop. He enigmatically communicates that he knows something about their secret by announcing that he has to call Scotland Yard. A few minutes later, when Alice's parents have returned to the family rooms, he explicitly comments on the use of the telephone booth by saying: "Don't go waving important evidence in telephone boxes—they've got glass doors. Detectives in glass houses shouldn't wave clues."

Hitchcock would seem to be commenting on the power of the visual over the verbal with this sequence, expressing some of his ambivalence about the disruptive nature of the new sound technology. Frank and Alice have stepped into the booth to secure some privacy from prying ears, but of course anyone can see what they are about if they have sufficient knowledge with which to interpret their behavior.

The function of this glassed-in box as a location of aural privacy has previously been established by two events earlier in this sequence. In the first, Alice goes into it to make her own call to Scotland Yard after she comes downstairs from her bedroom. The gossip customer who will later be the source of the famous mumbled knife monologue is already in the shop, chattering away to Mr. White. When Alice closes the door of the telephone booth, her chatter immediately turns into a mumble, which also prepares us for this customer's big scene.

Later, when Frank steps into the box to call in to work, he at first leaves the door open, but then closes it when the content of his report becomes more important, and he notices that the curious Mr. White is listening from behind the counter. This transition from sound to silence, from public speech to secret, is underlined by Mr. White's evident annoyance when he can no longer receive inside information about the local killing which has the entire neighborhood abuzz with speculation.

With this use of an object naturally found in such an environment, Hitchcock is able to convey a feeling about one of the many polarities that animated his Catholic soul, the difference between outer appearances and inner reality. The phone box becomes a visual equivalent for Alice's guilty secret, shared with Frank when he steps into it with her, and not protected from the outsider who has some knowledge of the situation.

In an earlier silent film, *The Lodger*, Hitchcock had used glass in an almost exactly opposite way, to reveal through a filmic illusion a sound that the audience could not otherwise hear. In that film a family very like the Whites sits in their parlor and worries as they listen to their lodger pacing back and forth in his room overhead. All of them glance significantly towards the ceiling, but that isn't enough to convey what it is they are paying attention to. In a visu-

al trick widely commented upon at the time and later, the director replaces the actual ceiling of the set with a glass one, making it possible for the audience to see the pacing from below, and in a certain sense to hear it.

This ability of glass to simultaneously reveal and conceal must have appealed mightily to an artistic sensibility almost obsessively concerned with dualities like order vs. chaos, public vs. private, reality vs. illusion, innocence vs. guilt. The importance of the shop sequence in *Blackmail* to the director is underscored by the fact that he almost exactly replicated it more than 30 years later in another film with a secretly guilty female protagonist, *Psycho*.

The scene takes place in the hardware store owned by Sam, Marion Crane's boyfriend. He also sleeps behind the shop, but in a seedy storeroom with just a cot and a few other living essentials, rather than an entire home. Marion's sister enters at the commencement of the scene, wanting to confront Sam about Marion's mysterious disappearance. Since his assistant and a chattering customer (very much like the gossip customer in *Blackmail*) are also in the store, she asks Sam to step into the phone booth with her to answer her questions.

At this point, the detective Arbogast, hired by Marion's employer, enters the store, in a manner strongly reminiscent of that of the blackmailer. He believes that Sam and Lila share the secret of Marion's whereabouts and deals with them in the same unctuous, knowing manner as Tracy's. Of course the situation is different, but the echoes of guilty knowledge and the troubled relationship between Frank and Alice in the earlier film and Sam and Lila in *Psycho* are too many and too loud to be ignored.

In later films Hitchcock will make different uses of phone booths. I will cite just two examples among the many possible. In *The Birds*, Melanie takes refuge in a phone booth during one of the mysterious attacks by seagulls and other birds on downtown Bodega Bay. She has run into this booth when her car, with its vulnerable windows, proved insufficient to protect her from this avian onslaught. As the suicidal birds hurl themselves against the walls of the booth in their efforts to get to its occupant, the glass begins to splinter, threatening to refuse Melanie the protection she so desperately seeks. This brings up another interesting quality of glass which I will be discussing soon—its dangerous breakability.

Hitchcock places Eve Kendall and Leonard in a bank of these booths in *North by Northwest*, and has Leonard impart his instructions about how to deal with the problem of Roger Thornhill in this way. The physical distance in a very public place between these two conspirators in their separate private cubicles both illustrates the gulf of distrust between them and serves as an ironic counterpoint to the intimate nature of their communication. The audience can see but not hear these two characters, which fills in for the quality of whispered, guilty speech with which such immoral and illegal activities would be discussed.

This property of glass, the blocking of sound, is used by Hitchcock at another significant point in *Blackmail*, and is also replicated in an important scene in *The 39 Steps*. When Alice makes the mistake of accepting the artist's invitation to visit his studio, she looks out the window soon after her arrival and is made less uneasy by the sight of a policeman walking the beat below. A few minutes later, when the attempted rape is underway, the audience sees the policeman walking the opposite direction and hears Alice's screams for help on the soundtrack, but the policeman continues unconcerned on his way.

This use makes visible another duality which absorbed Hitchcock's artistic attention throughout his career, the tension between order and chaos, or more precisely the irruption of chaos-

1. Donald Spoto—*The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*. New York: 1983. p. 14

2. Robin Wood—*Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. New York, 1989. p. 260

3. See for instance the opening pages of Alexander Walker—*The Shattered Silents*. London, 1978

ic forces into a seemingly stable, ordered environment. The presence of the policeman, an obvious representative of social order, makes Alice feel falsely secure, so that she can blithely take the next flirtatious steps which will encourage the artist to his act of sexual aggression.

The director frequently made the expression of sexual passion a source of disorder in his movies. The ironic fact that the policeman cannot hear Alice's plea for help plays both to Hitchcock's contemplation of the meanings and uses of sound at this stage of his career, and to the intersections of private and public that more permanently interested him. In later films the gaze will reverse; rather than protagonists looking out of windows, voyeuristic characters, and the audience, will be looking into them.

In *The 39 Steps* a form of guilty voyeurism causes a misinterpretation of visible evidence secretly seen through a window. Richard Hannay, a man falsely suspected of murder, has taken refuge in an isolated farmhouse in which an older man, a crofter, lives with his innocent young wife. Just before these three sit down to dinner a grocery order has been delivered, which includes a newspaper on the cover of which an article about Hannay's crime and flight is prominently displayed.

Hannay desperately wants to see what has been written about him, and equally desperately wants to keep the crofter and his wife from seeing it. These two conflicting desires make Hannay behave in a way that causes the wife to see that which he is trying to hide. Since she has been recently charmed by him she doesn't want to believe that he is the fugitive, and looks at him in a way that blends shock and complicity. The crofter notices their glances during a superbly staged grace-saying sequence, and suspects that they are trying to set up a sexual assignation.

In one of the many allusions to lewd jokes with which the director peppers his narratives, the crofter says he thinks he left the barn door open and excuses himself from the table. He sneaks around the outside of the house and peeks in through a window (the voyeurism theme already present in the opening shots of Hitchcock's first film *The Pleasure Garden*, which would become so important in his later work), through which he can see but not hear the expostulations of his wife and guest. Since he wants to believe that sexual hanky panky is underway, he does not consider that they could be talking about anything other than what he suspects. Glass has again served as a successful barrier to sound.

The glass wall between the White family's private quarters and their shop, with its curtains covering the bottom half of the windows, represents another kind of barrier, the curtain between a stage and an audience. When members of the White family go out into the store to deal with their customers, from private to public space, they are in a sense performing a role. And certainly Alice and Frank behave differently with Tracy in the shop space than they do when they have come into the dining room.

William Rothman writes at length about Hitchcock's fascination with the theater and theatrical metaphors in his chapter on *Murder!* in *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*.⁴ *Blackmail* is informed throughout with curtains as theatrical references, from the exit of the policemen in the opening sequence from their traveling van, to the curtains decorously drawn over the bed in the artist's studio, the site of the rape attempt and Alice's self defense.

In this latter scene, the curtains also stand in for the movie screen in an interesting way. Given the moral climate of the time, Hitchcock could not actually show the details of the attempted sexual assault, so he makes it happen behind the curtains. But the struggle is apparent because the curtains are constantly being fluttered by it. Then the event culminates with one hand reaching from behind the curtains to grasp a bread knife, and soon after another hand falling lifelessly through them.

Back in the set for the tobacconist's shop, the director has also used his windows as screens in various ways. Though the film was mostly shot on a set, Hitchcock creates a sense of street verisimili-

tude by showing from a point of view inside the shop movements outside the big picture window, simultaneously inserting appropriate sounds like horns and engines into the soundtrack. If your eye drifts from the foreground action to look at objects passing by it is quite clear that most of the vehicles are merely cardboard cutouts.

Later, when the action has moved into the parlor, and the struggle for control of the situation between Frank and Tracy is reaching its climax, we see through the glass, half-curtained wall in the background other Scotland Yard detectives entering the shop on their way to apprehend the blackmailer, whom they believe to be guilty of the artist's murder. This vision, seeming almost a movie within a movie, adds to the already considerable tension that has been generated between Frank and the criminal.

In *The 39 Steps* Hitchcock uses a window of the professor's country home in a similar fashion. In shots immediately previous to Hannay's arrival at the professor's house we have seen a comically exaggerated police chase, slightly speeded up to highlight the bumbling progress of the police through a rapidly moving river in pursuit of the fugitive. After his arrival the professor calls Hannay over to the picture window, amiably chatting about how proud they are of the view. Hannay sees a scene almost identical to that which we have just seen, a Keystone Kops foolery of policemen stumbling along the course of the river.

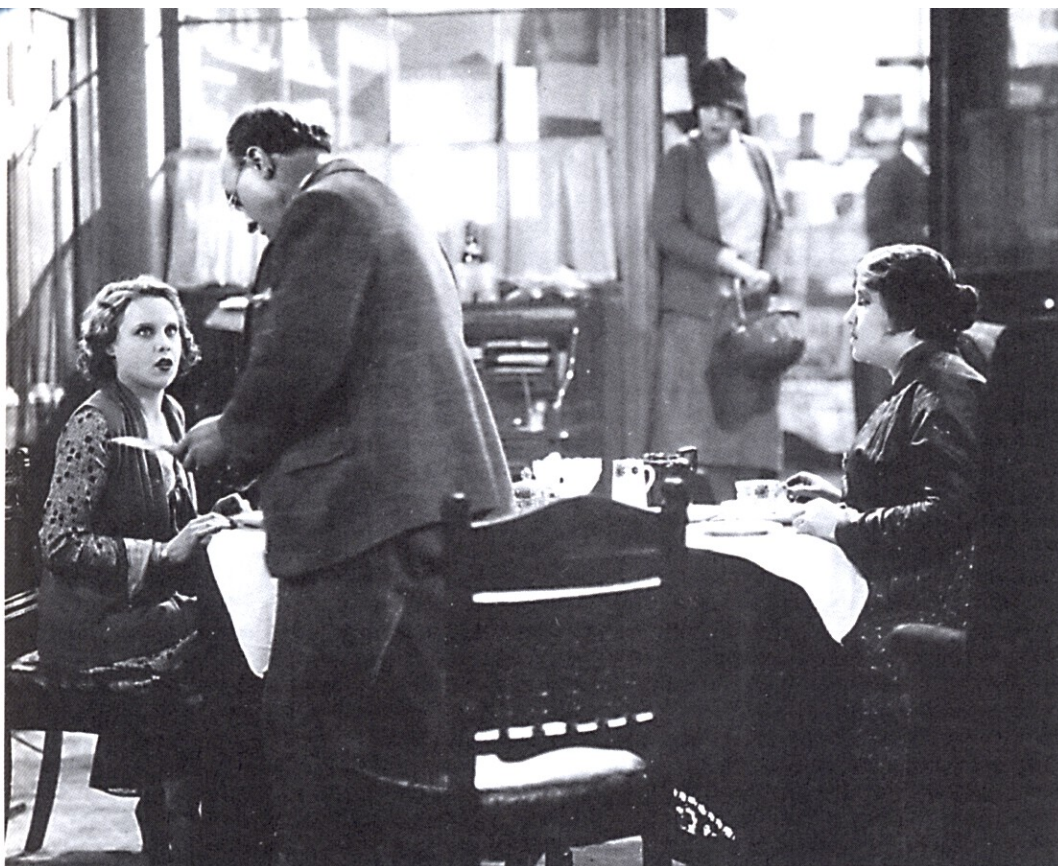
These uses of windows and curtains indicate an interesting confluence between the artist's aesthetic and moral preoccupations. In his interest in theater, Hitchcock seems primarily concerned with philosophical implications of the differences between illusion and reality, actor and spectator, life and art. The intersection of these ideas with Catholic concerns about guilt and innocence, or good and evil, creates some intriguing psychological conundrums for a theater artist who believes that the real is superior to illusion, but who is much more interested in the illusion.

Similarly the Catholic telling this story may well want to uphold the social and moral values of the good and the innocent, but he is far more interested in the other side of this dichotomy. The motive power of this story and so many other of Hitchcock's stories is generated by temptation, and an examination of the results when temptation is given in to. That is most frequently what causes chaos to break through into an ordered world in the Hitchcock universe.

The permeability of the boundaries between these various sets of opposites is given visual signification in Hitchcock's movies by the shattering nature of glass. Immediately after the arrival of the other Scotland Yard detectives, when the glassed in shop and family room begin to feel too confining to Tracy, he bursts out of his confinement by jumping through a window and running away. We do not directly see this event, but watch the surprise in Frank's eyes as we hear the sound of glass breaking.

Tracy flees from the White house in the general direction of the British Museum, into which he runs when his pursuers get too close. Like a mouse in a maze he scurries from one room to another looking for the security of a hiding place (at one point he watches his pursuers run past him, reflected in the glass of a display case), and soon runs up a ladder to the high roof of the Museum. Here he makes his final stand, trying desperately to proclaim his innocence before accidentally falling, or being pushed, through the glass dome in front of which he stands. A few seconds later the sound of shattering glass gives an aural marker of the distance of his fatal fall.

This sound refers back subtly to a brief event in the opening sequence of *Blackmail*. After the then nameless detectives, including Frank, have invaded a man's bedroom to arrest him, a watcher from below throws a stone through the window, presumably at the police. The noise of the window breaking is one of the few sound effects in this first, mostly silent, sequence of the film. The breaking of the window is highlighted in a special way by a repositioning of the camera to place this window behind the bed (and there-



The Whites at breakfast, visited by the talkative neighbour.

fore in the center of the screen, with the scene's characters arrayed around it), a move which necessitated pulling the bed away from the wall and repositioning the camera. This stone through the window turns out to be one of the first hints of the director's extensive use of the breaking glass motif in this and in later films.⁵

A similar event to Tracy's escape through the White's window is found in *The 39 Steps*, which on close analysis seems to be a synthesis of the concerns of both *Blackmail* and *Murder!* into the director's first really major international success. Midway in the film, when Hannay tells his story to the local sheriff in Scotland and then learns that he has not been believed, he also jumps through a window, breaking it in the process, to escape from this representative of law and order. The jump and subsequent pursuit have an opposite meaning here from that which they have in *Blackmail* (since an innocent man is escaping rather than a guilty one), but the similarity of technique is certainly suggestive.

In his chapter on *Psycho* in *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*, William Rothman suggests an idea he went on to develop in a later book, *Documentary Film Classics*. This idea is the 'breaking of the screen,' or removing the barrier between a film and its audience, symbolized by setting up a representation of the screen or a frame within the screen and then seeming to move through it. It is possible that Hitchcock's early preoccupation with characters jumping through windows, breaking through restraints, is an early manifestation of this idea. Certainly this possibility could be more deeply explored.

Another artistic use of glass in Hitchcock's work involves the manipulation of its reflecting abilities. In the initial arrest sequence previously referred to, the man arrested first sees his Scotland Yard adversaries in a mirror on his dresser, a mirror which diffracts their image in a way suggestive of the use of mirrors to imply psychological discontinuity in film noir movies made more than two decades after *Blackmail*. One of Hitchcock's most spectacular uses of the reflective powers of glass comes in *Under Capricorn*, when Michael Wilding holds his overcoat behind a glass divider so that Ingrid Bergman can see herself in the darkened glass.

The list of ways Hitchcock uses glass in his movies does not

begin to be exhausted by what I have already described in this paper. He uses light falling through windows to create expressive patterns of shadows in many films, for instance in the empty apartment to which Hannay brings the doomed Anabella early in *The 39 Steps*. He furnishes his sets with various glass constructions which evoke the German expressionist sculpture and painting he would have been familiar with when he was making films in Munich at the beginning of his career.

What is important in an examination of the director's use of this motif is the variety of ways it reveals the dualistic concerns which motivated him artistically throughout his career. In 1954 Hitchcock caused to be built what up to that time was the most expensive and most complicated movie set ever constructed in Hollywood. This was the courtyard with its associated buildings (and windows which became metaphors for movie screens) in which *Rear Window* was staged and filmed.

But the set he built a quarter of a century earlier for his first sound film, which uses glass as extensively as that later set, should be considered as an equally important marker in his development. With this set he recreated a location from his childhood and made a visual representation of many of his personal moral concerns. He was obviously pleased with the expressive power he discovered in his use of glass during the making of *Blackmail*, because he went on to use it again and again for the rest of his professional life.

I wish to thank Professor Charles Warren for his support and influence.

4. William Rothman—*Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*. Cambridge, 1982. pp 57-107, passim.

5. This also contributes to the obsessively symmetrical nature of the film, which was so effectively diagrammed by Robin Wood in his chapter on *Blackmail* in *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* that the similar symmetries of Hitchcock's other films becomes more visible to the reader.

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George Cukor's "Take" on the Literacy Narrative: Hollywood Style

by Scott F. Stoddart

In his seminal *The American Cinema* (1966), Andrew Sarris relegates George Cukor to a section entitled "The Far Side of Paradise," dedicated to directors who "fall short of the Pantheon either because of a fragmentation of their vision or because of disruptive career problems" (83). However, in his brief assessment of Cukor's illustrious fifty year career as a Hollywood film director, he never once delineates what the "fragmentation" or the "disruptive career problems" were that places Cukor's work in this secondary category. As a matter of fact, he chastises those who only see Cukor as a "women's director," and praises Cukor's films as those of a "genuine artist" (90):

The thematic consistency of Cukor's career has been achieved through a judicious mixture of selection and emphasis. The director's theme is imagination, with the focus on the imager rather than on the thing imagined. (89)

However, in regard to his hierarchy, Sarris appears as guilty as the critics he debunks because he offers no criteria of his placement here. This is just another glaring example of the fact that critics and scholars alike have never known quite what to do with Cukor's incredible *oeuvre*. Spanning from the early sound era, working with Lewis Milestone as a dialect coach on *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) to his last project *Rich and Famous* (1981), Cukor's vision endured throughout the studio era and into the independent arena. Yet, critics and theorists both simply dismiss him as a "woman's director," a critical label akin to "box-office poison" levied at stars during the studio years who defied the moguls.

There are a number of reasons why Cukor suffers in critical circles, and we, namely, have to begin with himself to find the root cause. In his later years, Cukor became deeply suspicious of the advent of film theory, and while he donated large amounts of time and even greater amounts of money to film schools in California, he avoided, in a series of interviews with Gavin Lambert, the popular term *auteur* because of its elitist tone:

I'm not an *auteur*, alas. And the whole *auteur* theory disconcerts me. To begin with, damn few directors can write. I have too much respect for good writers to think of taking over that job. Also, to be frank, not all directors can direct ... I suppose I influence a great deal in many ways. I have ideas about a script, I influence the performances very much, and visually I go on a

great deal about sets and clothes... That, I choose to say, is style. You make big decisions and small decisions and decisions you aren't even consciously aware of. You do unexpected things on the set. You have a vision. (13-14)

Emphasizing the ideas of "style," and "teamwork," Cukor consciously defied the *auteurist* label because he felt it demeaned the collaborative effort that created a film—a theory that has only recently become more accepted among theorists.

A second "problem" with Cukor's work is its subtlety—a quality that continues to baffle those critics who pay more attention to camera movement as a plot contribution than to Cukor's whole reason for making films—to tell stories of people. In regard to this, Cukor believed that directors who paid more attention to shooting and editing for the camera rather than to the performance "revealed an ungenerous spirit" (19). Later, he told Peter Bogdonovich that he gathered his influences by walking down the street, or reading books—not from other film directors (443-44), because he believed the "director and his camerawork should not intrude on the story"

You should never move the camera unless you have to; you should remain unostentatious; because if you do a lot of fancy footwork, maybe they notice you as a director, but I think it hurts the story. (444-45)

Cukor's own theory, recognizing the collaborative effort of the film-making process, paired with his conviction that the director remain invisible, has made him a very difficult study for theorists. It also explains why the numerous interviews that he gave before he died in 1983, and the two major biographies that surfaced since then, focus on his relationships with the many movie stars he befriended over the years. Instead of examining the subtleties of Cukor's method, these writings border on exposing Cukor's "double life" as a homosexual who befriended his female co-stars¹, or on the elegance of his personal style, again attributed to his relationships to his female stars.² No one "reads" Cukor's films; critics only "discuss" them via plot synopses.

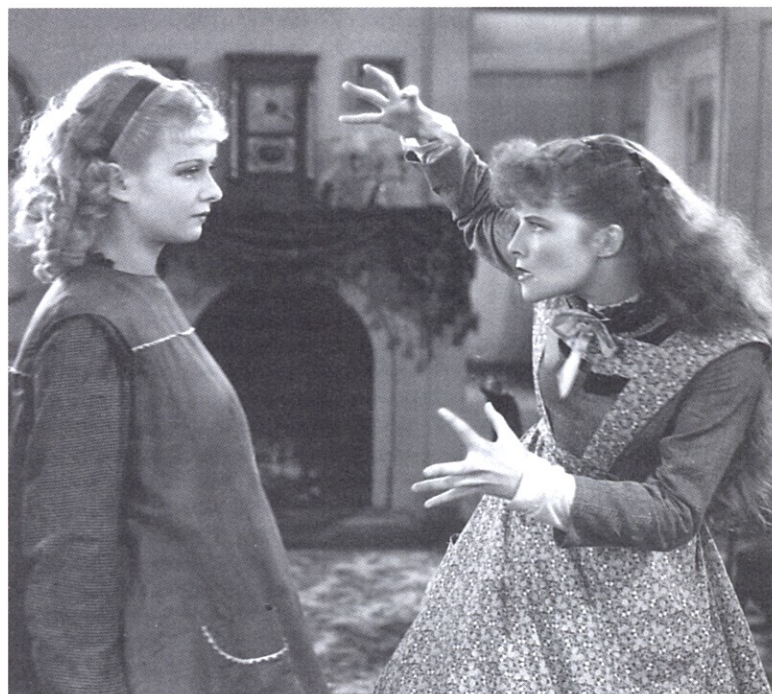
However, I would like to take this occasion to begin theorizing and reading the work of George Cukor in the sophisticated manner it is due. His attention to the delicate balance between text and performance, coupled with his "less-is-more" theory of camera-



Little Women: Laurie (Douglass Montgomery) and Jo (Katharine Hepburn) rehearse her play.

work, makes him all the more fascinating a study. Finding commonalities between his very eclectic films is one way to begin a reading of his work. In constructing my own method for reading Cukor's work, I turn now to one particular kind of text that the director appeared drawn toward in an effort to illustrate how Cukor's decision to prioritize the text and the performance created a truly unique spectacle.

The literacy narrative is a new label for a very old genre of Hollywood film that follows a pedagogical process, focusing on a protagonist empowered through the acquisition of a new "language," usually as the result of a desire to achieve a clearly delineated goal. Rhetorical theory inspired the reading of texts as literacy narratives, initially looking at autobiographical writings of artists who chronicle their own inspiration and growth through the pursuit of their art, particularly examining their relationships with those who inspired them to express themselves. Rhetorical analysis paved the way for the discovery of literary texts that function as literacy narratives, reading fictional narratives "that foreground issues of language acquisition and literacy" (Eldred and Mortensen 513). When reading for literacy narratives, the reader understands the protagonist's desire to acquire a new language, and the reader witnesses the social processing they undergo as a



Amy (Joan Bennett) gets direction from Jo.

1 McGilligan, Patrick. *George Cukor: A Double Life A Biography of the Gentleman Director*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.

2 Levy, Emanuel. *George Cukor, Master of Elegance: Hollywood's Legendary Director and his Stars*. New York: William Morrow, 1994.

result. In this way, "Literacy narratives sometimes include explicit images of schooling and teaching; they include texts that both challenge and affirm culturally scripted ideas about literacy" (513). Therefore, readers experience the protagonist's transformation into a new linguistic order, and comprehend the consequences of their movement into this new linguistic sphere.

The quintessential literacy narrative is George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1897), a play that focuses on the education of a pupil determined to move from one socially linguistic order to another. In foregrounding the play as a literacy narrative, Eldred and Mortensen find that the text raises

questions about the nature of literacy education, about whether literacy can be acquired without institutional training, about the relationship between literacy and socialization, employment, and mobility, about the continuities and tensions between speech and writing, about the influence of popular and literacy genres on literary formation, and about the role of gender in the acquisition of schooled language. (513)

In other words, the reading focuses on the issue of empowerment through education; education becomes the transformational means by which the protagonist succeeds in participating within the prescribed order.

Cukor's reputation as a "woman's director" is not the central reason for re-examining his films as literacy narratives; however, it does provide a theoretical paradigm to use in measuring his subtle directorial techniques—techniques that have long gone overlooked in the assessment of Hollywood's major directors. When Cukor commits a screenplay that serves as a literacy narrative to celluloid, the result is a film that transcends time to instruct the spectator in another form of literacy education, making us the willing pupils of Cukor's own filmic pedagogy.

***Little Women* (1933)**

Long thought a book for little girls, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1864) suffered until being recently re-discovered by academics as an important text of feminist literature. The episodic narrative is, indeed, a literacy narrative, as it follows the March girls as they grow into "little women," a term coined by their parents who guide their maturation. Each of the four girls becomes the focus of significant portions of the text, and each embodies a goal and a particular fault that makes their journey real. Meg, the eldest, desires to marry well in order to become a socialite; her weakness for these societal trappings complicates her more genuine spirit. Jo, whose story makes up the bulk of the literacy narrative, desires to be a writer; her quick temper and impulsive behavior, however, reveal her to be much more melodramatic than the publishing community desires. Beth, the sickly invalid, desires to maintain the home, allowing her sisters to seek their strength in the outer world; her health is her primary weakness, as it prevents her from straying too far from the March hearth. Amy, the youngest, desires to be an artist; her vanity, however, makes her appear a spoiled child, which prevents her from exploring the possibilities of her own genuine soul. Each girl, in facing her "burdens," eventually learns that their goals can be met when reality tempers the extremity of their desires.

Cukor was approached by David Selznick to film *Little Women* as a vehicle for Katharine Hepburn, and he admits, at first, that he labeled the story "sentimental"—a term pinned to the novel from its early days:

Of course I'd heard of it all my life, but it was a story that little girls read ... When I came to read it, I was startled. It's not sentimental or saccharine, but very strong-minded, full of character, and a wonderful picture of New England family life. It's full of that admirable New England sternness, about sacrifice and austerity. (Lambert 75)

Cukor claims that the adaptation for the screen helped to make the film strong because it mirrors the novel so beautifully:

The construction was very loose, very episodic, like the novel. No plottiness. Things happen, but they're not all tied together. (The later version made the mistake of slicking it up.) But the writers believed in the book, they understood its vitality, which is not namby-pamby in any way ... If you really respect a work, you must respect the weaknesses, or the vagaries, as well as the strengths. (76)

This belief is what makes Cukor's version of *Little Women* so profoundly moving.

The film eschews the cliché convention for adaptations, using book pages to screen the credits or to introduce the narrative; Cukor's credit sequence frames a New England farmhouse in a delightful snowstorm, situating the narrative in the real world. The screenplay differs from the novel by introducing us first to Mrs. March, more affectionately known as Marmee (Spring Byington), completing a day of charitable work at a local hospital, arranging for families to receive food and clothing for Christmas. We then cut to the March home and Cukor's camera introduces us to each of the March girls as they prepare for Marmee's arrival home. The screenplay maintains a central conversation from the text as Jo (Katharine Hepburn) and Marmee reminisce about a game the girls played as children based on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which introduces each of the girls' weaknesses in connection to their initial goals. The community of "little women" established in these opening moments centralizes the protagonists for the spectator, enabling us to comprehend the reality of growing up as house-bound women during the Civil War era.

Both the film and the novel rely on two pedagogues to relate the texts as literacy narratives; Marmee does act as the initial pedagogue, to a degree, and Jo learns from her encounter with Professor Bhaer (Paul Lukas) in a secondary manner. In this respect, we follow Jo's writing career in the early section in two significant ways. The first involves the Marches' "production" of Jo's play for the neighborhood girls on Christmas Eve. Cukor shows the girls rehearsing the play, Jo teaching Amy (Joan Bennett) to faint "properly," Meg (Frances Dee) attending to the costumes, and Beth (Jean Parker) to the sets, all in an effort to stage Jo's melodrama. Jo's bravado during the performance, naturally, leads to a comical disaster, but the important point is revealing Jo's passion for her craft. Not only does the play hold the neighborhood girls in rapt attention, up until Jo's mishap, but her song to the play's heroine (which we must assume she has written as well) is met with a great deal of applause.

The second instance of Jo and her craft is the secretive selling of her first story, "The Phantom Hand," to the local newspaper for \$1.50. We see Jo putting the finishing touches on the story in her attic study, taking off her writing cap and climbing down the garden trellis to sneak out of the house. We then cut to a close-up of a door to the local newspaper, and Jo leaving it, looking at what appears to be a check. Here, on the street, she encounters Laurie (Douglass Montgomery), who tries to get Jo to reveal her secret; when she refuses, he rips the check from her hand, and we read it over his shoulder in close-up: "In full payment for story entitled 'The Phantom Hand.'" What is so wonderful about the sequence is Laurie's complete joy and Jo's breathless happiness at her success. Cukor's camera tracks with the characters as they joyfully proceed home, promising to keep quiet until the story appears. Later, Jo reads the story's final installment aloud to Beth and to Amy, who both tremble with fear at the story's gothic qualities. However, the girls shriek with glee as Laurie reveals that the story's author is Jo. This component is an important one in seeing the film as a literacy narrative because it not only reveals Jo's commitment to her

craft, but it sets up the next portion of the narrative as Jo seriously embarks on her career as an author.

The film employs one interesting image as a transitional device. Repeatedly, Cukor introduces episodes, such as Mr. Brook's (John Davis Lodge) courting of Meg, with an image of Jo reading a book. This confirms the idea in the mind of the spectator that Jo is much more than her "tomboy" exterior. In her first visit to Laurie, Jo and he fence in Mr. Laurence's (Henry Stephenson) well-apportioned sitting room while discussing Dickens, Scott, and other popular European authors of adventurous stories. This distinguishes Jo from her sisters in a significant way, because writing and reading are such solitary activities, and these actually contribute to her more masculinized image, as education was a male domain at the time. Eventually, when Laurie pledges his love to Jo, he distinguishes her from other girls that he meets at college, realizing that she is so much more than he. However, she refuses him by reminding him of her more solitary mission: "I loathe elegant society, and you love it. And, you hate my scribbling." Jo always returns to her writing as her primary goal, and uses the opportunity to go to New York—as a governess—and to "get new ideas for my stories."

Of course, Jo's excursion to New York introduces her to her future husband—not the "good-for-nothing" scrape that Laurie predicts—but Professor Bhaer, a kind, gentle German scholar who "learns people how to talk in foreign countries," according to the maid. One night, while sewing, Jo overhears Bhaer in the adjoining parlor, singing in his native German. Cukor's close-ups of Jo listening to him reveal her interest, and when he tells her he is singing Goethe, she leans against the piano in a more seductive manner. Here, Bhaer begins to connect with her as he tells her of great composers, like Tchaikovsky, who wrote passionate music from the torture within their souls. Jo responds as she always does—aligning herself with the artist within: "If only I could write something like that—something splendid that would set other hearts on fire." It is here that both Alcott and Cukor build into the narrative the relationship with the pedagogue figure, as Bhaer becomes Jo's central critic and teacher.

As the film progresses, Cukor shows us in close-up a pile of newspapers on Jo's table, each titled after similar popular press papers of the day, such as "The Last Sensation" and "The Volcano," showing us the type of paper that Jo continues to publish in—papers filled with the gothic romance stories that she continues to write as inspired by her reading. Jo meets two disappointments in this section of the film: the first being Aunt March's announcement that Amy will accompany her to Europe, instead of her; the second, and more important, being Bhaer's criticism of her stories. Jo takes his criticism hard, but he assures her it is only for her own good. After admitting his disappointment, he asks her "Why do you write such artificial characters? Such artificial plots? Full of murder and such women?" When Jo begins to sob, Bhaer admits that he is only trying to help—and Jo begins to agree: "If I can't stand the truth, then I'm not worth anything. Oh, I didn't think those stories were so very good. But, 'The Duke's Daughter' paid the butcher's bill. And, the 'Curse of the Coventry' was a blessing for the Marches because it sent Beth and Marmee to the seashore." Cukor frames the conversation in an interesting way—rather than employing the standard shot-reverse-shot pattern, he centers Jo and Bhaer in the frame together: Jo sitting on a stool, and Bhaer, kneeling on the ground, almost at her feet. In this respect, they are very much eye-to-eye, and on an even ground—neither has authority in the frame. This prepares us for the revelation that Bhaer is falling in love with Jo, and that Jo is not intimidated by Bhaer's knowledge—they are suitable companions because they share a similar passion for the intellectual. The conversation turns immediately to Bhaer's advice, and this solidifies his inherent pedagogical spirit for Jo: "Say to yourself, 'I will never write another line that I have not first heard in my heart. While I am young, I will write simple and beautiful things that I under-

stand now. And, maybe when I am older, and I have lived life more, then I will write about such foolish wretches, but I will make them live and breathe like my Shakespeare did.'" Jo's immediate response is that she never could aspire to be a Shakespeare; Bhaer tells her instead to be "a Josephine March"—a compliment of the highest order, recognizing that Jo has the talent and the passion to become a serious writer on her own terms.

A catastrophe hits the March family after this climactic moment, as Jo hears of Beth's final illness. She returns home to sit with her sister as she dies, in a very realistic sequence. Cukor holds the camera steady as the camera centers on Beth holding Jo close as she tells her that she is no longer afraid—only saddened at the prospect of being homesick for Jo. This intimate moment cuts to a close-up of a sheet of paper, on which Jo writes the following:

My Beth
Oh my sister, passing from me
Out of human care and strife
Leave us, as a gift, those virtues
Which have beautified your life
By that deep and solemn river
Where your willing feet now stand.

While the poem is still a bit syrupy, the sentiment is certainly real, and the realistic manner in which Cukor screens the death is meant to resonate through Jo and through us. In a final moment, Jo kisses Beth one last time. The camera cuts to a windowsill on which two blackbirds sing. As the birds fly away, the camera remains focused on the empty sill as Jo calls for their mother, announcing Beth's end. Jo does not sob, but holds her mother and tells her not to cry as "Beth is well at last." The moment is sharp, and not sentimentalized—much like Beth's death in the novel. Instead, it becomes a lesson for Jo, as she uses the time to write and to reflect, doing, in essence, just what Bhaer suggested.

The scene shifts to Jo ironing, and discussing with Meg that her new story has been sent off. As Meg relates that she is saddened that Jo has not shared it with anyone, we get the impression that it is a very different type of story. In a conversation with the returning Laurie, now married to Amy, she tells him that "We cannot be playmates any longer—but we can be brother and sister," revealing a maturity in Jo that has come as a consequence of both living and polishing her craft. Bhaer arrives with a book in hand, and he tells her that this new work is full of "simple truth and beauty," a high note of praise from the professor. This sets the stage for his simple proposal to Jo and the film's conclusion. Jo, now a "respected" author can marry the man who is her equal—who respects both her and her craft.

In commenting on the success of *Little Women*, Cukor felt that much was due to the manner in which the texts, both the original novel and the screenplay, were respected by himself and his cast:

I know I always say this, but the text determined that. You couldn't have done the picture in any other style. The director must never overwhelm a picture, he must serve it. This may not be the attention-getting way, but I believe in it. The moment you're aware of something, like the photography is so great, it usually means something is lacking. (77)

In this respect, Cukor admits that the film text is a valid method of bringing a note of honesty to the Hollywood literacy narrative.

***Born Yesterday* (1950)**

Cukor's filmed version of Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin's social stage comedy *Born Yesterday* is a shining example of a literacy narrative Hollywood style. According to Levy, the screenplay version of the Broadway play underwent three major revisions before the



Born Yesterday: Billie Dawn (Judy Holliday) receives an education from Paul (William Holden).

studio agreed to let Cukor begin filming: "Cukor and Kanin suspected a certain kind of censorship was at work. The omissions—were disastrous. To have rewritten the script into a snide piece of mushmouthery, was 'a terrible whiff from the stench of cowardice'" (191). The play's subject, the symbolic re-birth of a socially fallen woman, tested the censors at every turn: "Cukor was urged to take the greatest care in photographing [Judy] Holliday's dresses: It was mandatory for the intimate parts of the body—specifically the breasts—to be fully covered" (191). However, as one can see from the final result, it is Cukor's adherence to the literacy tradition that makes the film succeed.

Born Yesterday follows Billie Dawn (Judy Holliday) to Washington, D. C., where she stays at the Blair House with her boyfriend of nine years, Harry Brock (Broderick Crawford), who desires repayment in the form of congressional support for campaigns financed over the years which advantaged his own entrepreneurial ventures in "junk." Our first glimpse of Billie is her arrival, tossing her three furs on to the arm of a silent bellboy, decked out in a glossy dress more suited for a nightclub than for street-wear. As the manager takes the couple through their "wing," Harry and Billie behave in their typically private fashion, bellowing back-and-forth between the balconies that adorn the suite in a unique shot-reverse shot pattern. But this does not only reveal the socially awkward character of Billie—it reveals the coarse demeanor of Harry as well. As Harry prepares for the visit of a Congressman and Mrs. Hedges (Larry Oliver; Barbara Brown), we see the inherent cruelty of Harry and Billie's relationship. She enters a room for "a drink" while Harry is being shaved, manicured, and shined for the Senator's visit, and while being interviewed by Paul Verrell (William Holden), a reporter for the *Washington Post*. Billie, in a frothy negligée, attempts to take a bottle of brandy back to her suite when Harry stops her. As she tries to explain her needs, Harry prevents her from speaking: "I don't want you around here stinking. Now, do what I'm tellin' ya!" The response shot is priceless, as Billie looks toward Paul with complete humiliation; it is our first indication that she does not know how to articulate herself in relation to

Harry. Just after this, Harry bellows her to sign some papers: "That's all I do around here is sign stuff." After Harry leaves, Billie enters into a little conversation with Jim, Harry's lawyer (Howard St. John), and the two subtly reveal their victimization:

Billie: What happened to all that stuff I signed last week?

Jim: All used up.

Billie: I bet I must have signed about a million of these.

Jim: That's what you get for being a multiple corporate officer.

Billie: I am? Well, what do you know.

Cukor frames this sequence significantly, keeping Billie seated with Jim standing over her. As she continues talking, she tells us that Harry took her away from the stage and her dream of "bein' a star" because he "didn't want to share me with the general public." Here, the conversation and the framing reveal to us the fragility and the powerlessness of Billie in the face of Harry's patriarchal oppression.

Later, we see that Billie is unable to discourse with the political set when Congressman and Mrs. Hedges arrive for cocktails. The Hedges attempt to hold a conversation with Billie, but her lack of social polish adds to the comic quality of their arrival. For instance, Mrs. Hedges refers to Billie as "Mrs. Brock," but because Harry repeatedly reminds her she is *not* Mrs. Brock, Billie does not respond to her. In another comical moment, Mrs. Hedges proclaims, "It is too bad the Supreme Court is not in session. You'd love that." Billie nods in agreement, but qualifies her ignorance by responding, "What is it?" Cukor's framing, again, is crucial, as each time the camera centers on the group, it maintains Billie in the corner of the frame, emphasizing her discomfort—in direct contrast to the standard centering used for the other characters. Billie embarrasses both herself and Harry as she insists on playing the radio and singing each time the conversation lags, setting the stage for Harry's idea. After the Hedges' visit, Harry begins to fear that Billie will embarrass him as he mingles with the Washington set; he hires Paul Verrell to educate Billie—to polish her rough edges—so she

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This version of the literacy narrative reveals two contrary patriarchal agendas as it enters into the discourse of the capitalist ethic. First, it suggests that an education can be purchased for the right price; second it implies that once purchased, an education will automatically elevate the student from social outcast to societal diva. In this light, the film parallels Eliza Dolittle's recognition that education removes her from her previous life without assuring her salvation in another. In their first real conversation, Paul interviews Billie, and he quickly realizes that Billie is a handful:

Paul: Harry would like us to spend a little time together.
Billie: So what are you—some kind of gigolo?
Paul: Not exactly.
Billie: So, what's the idea?
Paul: Well, he'd just like me to put you wise to a few things—show the ropes—answer any questions that you might have.
Billie: I got no questions.
Paul: Then, I'll give you some.
Billie: Thanks.

Cukor screens this early portion of the conversation in a similar fashion to those screened before—Billie sitting, the man standing over her. However, once Paul realizes that Billie is not going to be a willing pupil, he tries something different. He sits down on a hassock, right in front of her, and the camera moves with him, framing the couple on the same level—as equals. Billie recognizes Paul's efforts from this point forward, and she begins to become receptive to his pedagogy. Billie begins to get more forward with Paul, asking him how much Harry is paying for her "education." But he astounds her when he tells her he would have done it for free: "This is not work—I like it." However, her subsequent line of questioning permits Paul a real avenue for showing Billie that she should want more out of life:

Billie: He thinks I'm too stupid, huh?
Paul: Well ...
Billie: He's right—I'm stupid. And, I like it, too.
Paul: You do?
Billie: Sure, I'm happy. I get everything I want—two mink coats. Everything. There's something I want, I ask. But, if he don't act friendly, I don't act friendly. So, as long as I know how to get what I want, that's all I want to know.
Paul: As long as you know what you want.
Billie: What?
Paul: As long as you know what you want.
Billie: You trying to mix me up?

Billie admits after this that she would like to refine her speech, so she could present herself a little more carefully. At this point, Billie begins to open up to Paul, revealing that she never uses the word "ain't" because the teachers at school "would slug ya" when you did, and telling him her real name is "Emma." When Paul says he doesn't believe in slugging, Billie readily agrees: "I guess I don't believe in it either. See, I'm a pretty fast learner." What we witness here is Paul instilling a bit of confidence in Billie, and it sets the literacy narrative in motion as Billie begins to tackle her learning because she begins to admire the more polished Paul—and even more so when he oversteps his boundaries and kisses her.

However, one final and comically brilliant sequence reveals to us that Billie might prove to be more "prepared" for learning than Paul or Harry expect. After Paul leaves, Billie joins Harry for a game of gin rummy—the only card game she claims to be able to play. Some conjecture that Cukor simply leaves the camera centered on the action of the game, played with no dialogue between the principles, to recreate the effect of the original stage performance. However, it is clearly evident that Cukor does not simply recreate the stage per-

formance here. He begins by adjusting the frame so that the camera focuses on Billie and keeps Harry off to the side. The table at which they play is noticeably small, and Harry appears clumsy and out of place at it. This placement also allows him to watch Billie with rapt curiosity as she rapidly organizes her cards to see what is in her hand. She quickly wins the first game, and her glee is only caught in the way she slams the cards down on the table, obviously mirroring Harry's abrupt way of revealing a winning hand before. The second hand begins as Billie deals the cards, carefully counting out each card to ensure the proper number. Harry begins to talk here, telling Billie to "pay attention to that Verrell—he might do you some good." All the while, Billie pays very careful attention to her hand, again, rapidly organizing the cards and retrieving the winning hand. The camera cuts for the first time to a close-up of Billie adding her winnings together. She uses her fingers to count out the figures, comically admitting to not being very bright mathematically. We return to the original set up after she reminds Harry that "You could use a little education yourself" and he tells her to shut up. The tension builds here in the third hand, as Billie deals the cards and her frustration prevents her from dealing evenly. However, once she organizes her cards, and she sees that she has a respectable hand, she begins to sing, consciously annoying Harry, who obviously is close to losing again. What we learn in this sequence is that Billie is inherently bright—she is capable of learning once someone shows an interest in her as a person. Obviously, Harry taught her to play cards when they were just together, and Billie took to the game as a way of bonding with him. This prepares us for Billie's subsequent education as Paul introduces her to the world at large.

Billie's transformation, however, is much the opposite of Eliza's—and this is, perhaps, the American take on the literacy narrative. Where Eliza learns to speak with grace and poise—she loses her impoverished dialect to secure a more genteel one—Billie never loses her natural speech tones. Instead, Paul increases her vocabulary and assists her in applying it to a new body of knowledge—to the world of current events, politics, and the law. One shot shows Billie reading the newspaper, having done just what Paul instructed her to do—circle anything she does not understand. The close-up shows Billie in bed, with whole articles circled, and dizzily confused about everything. However, she reveals her natural savvy once more, as she makes a play for Paul, an attempt to replay the kiss of the night before; when he refuses, she ends the conversation: "I ought to put a big circle around you."

Another distinction between the classic and Cukor's Hollywood literacy narrative is the situation of the teacher. For instance, in Shaw's narrative, Henry Higgins is seen in an antagonistic light, with manners and scruples to match. He bets his friend Pickering that he can turn Eliza from a "guttersnipe" to a "girl in a flower shop" before the Embassy ball, a form of masquerade that he does achieve. However, he never once thinks of Eliza's future, and never pauses to consider that this new education will make her useless in the world that she understands. In much the opposite fashion, Paul assists Billie in not only becoming educated, but he continuously shows her how she will be able to apply her new knowledge. Cukor introduces this idea with a montage of Billie touring the Capitol, watching young and old marvel in the building's history—as Paul watches Billie, she wanders around looking not at the artifacts, but at the people learning about their heritage. The camera, then, tilts upwards to render her awe at the ceiling of the Rotunda; when she hears that it took an artist many years of painting flat on his back to finish it, she begins to become intrigued. An abrupt cut back to the hotel shows Billie exiting by herself with her new glasses—a look Harry barely recognizes. We then follow her through a second montage as she tours the Library of Congress and The National Archives by herself, following the tour groups and learning about the famous documents. When she later meets up with Paul, she enthusiastically shows him what she acquired on her tour. In a subsequent conversation about an op-ed piece he wrote for the paper,

Billie tells him "I think it is the most wonderful thing I ever read. I didn't understand one word of it." Paul, rather than laughing, shows her how to break down the words and to understand the article's principle image: "The Yellowing Democratic Manifesto." Billie, ultimately, begins to understand Paul's central criticism of the government—that people like Harry trample on the rights of others through economic abuse.

At a concert later that evening, Billie reveals to Paul that she received a letter from her father after eight years. What is so significant here is that Paul learns that Billie is from a decent background, and that her father is responsible for instilling in her an ethical sense of responsibility. She relates a story of how he offended her one night after she offered him \$100 to repay him for all he had done for her:

One night, I came home and gave him \$100. Do you know what he did with it? Well, it sure didn't do the plumber no good. I thought he was going to hit me for sure, but he never hit me once... He says he's thought about me everyday. I haven't thought about him once, even, in five years. Oh, that's nothing against him. I haven't thought of anything... He says I should write him again, and that I should have a hot lunch every day. And, I should write to let him know how I am, but he doesn't want to see me if I'm living in any way unethical—I looked it up.

What is so nice about the sequence is that the camera frames Billie in such a way as to show us her gradually shifting emotions—and her gradual recognition of all that her father tried to teach her years before. Cukor rarely cuts to Paul here, so we can really focus on Billie's transformation.

We then move to another sequence, recording Billie's tour of the National Gallery of Art ("even more gorgeous than the Radio City music hall"), and The Jefferson Memorial, and each visit contributes to her understanding of how these monuments represent her as an American citizen. The pedagogical approach Paul orchestrates differs from Higgins' approach because he attempts to assess the end result. A perfect example of this is when the two sit in the National Gallery and discuss "The Happy Peasant" by Robert G. Ingersoll, a narrative that extols the virtues of being a simple man rather than a mogul, such as Napoleon. Later, at the Jefferson Memorial, Paul tells her "The entire history of the world has been a struggle between the selfish and the unselfish," and he begins to point his lessons toward helping Billie to understand that Harry is "a menace," a selfish man who uses everything and anyone to his own end. "I hate his life—what he does—what he stands for, not him," Paul explains. But, Billie recognizes Paul's real weakness is her—and the reason he gets so angry at Harry's brand of business is because of what it does to her.

The final act involves Billie's first real comprehension of her education and her ability to use it to her own advantage. Cukor's camera opens on an image of Billie reading, sitting on a huge pile of books. Her elegant apartment now mirrors that of a learned scholar—Beethoven plays on the stereo, art prints are tacked to the walls, books and papers tossed about in a scholarly array. However, Billie appears frustrated, and her subsequent conversation with Paul tells us why. She appears confused at his indifference toward her, and she admits that she realizes now that she embarked on this pedagogical mission for the wrong reasons—to make him like her.

I never thought I would go through anything like this for anybody ... Like getting all mixed up in my head! Wondering and worrying and thinking and stuff like that. Last night I went to bed and started thinking—I couldn't fall asleep for ten minutes! I don't know if it's so good to find out so much so quick.

Cukor screens the sequence nicely, allowing Paul to sit, and Billie to command the room. She is dressed in a noticeably different fashion,

a more discreet blouse set off by slacks and an outer frock that moves like a gown. Her more commanding presence is not overlooked by Paul, who sits in his chair looking up at her, showing us that he sees the effect of Billie's hard work. And, his understanding is our window into seeing the difference as well.

After Paul leaves, however, we witness Billie's real transformation in her conversations and actions with Harry. The events begin with a framing device Cukor employs that runs throughout the sequence. Billie sits in the foreground of the frame, reading a book; Harry sits down, positioned to be looking over her shoulder. This is a crucial image as it prepares us for the film's change in tone. Billie begins by asking Harry why they are in Washington:

Billie: Harry, what's this business we're down here for—can you tell me?

Harry: What do you mean "we"?

Billie: Well, I'm a partner, in a sort of way ...

Harry: A silent partner.

Billie: So?

Harry: So, shut up.

Billie: I gotta a right to know ...

Harry: You gotta right to keep outta my hair too. Now, put your nose in a book and keep it there.

Billie: I don't want to do anything if it's against the law—that's one sure thing.

Harry: You'll do what I tell you.

Billie: I think I know what it is, only I'm not sure.

Harry: What's a matta with you? You're doin' alright, ain't ya? Is there something you want you ain't got, maybe?

Billie: Yes. I want to be like the "Happy Peasant."

Harry: Alright, I'll buy it for ya. Now, will you quit crabbin'?

Harry turns the questioning to their relationship momentarily—a pattern that used to break Billie's train of thought. However, Billie, now more in tune with her own reasoning, is not so easily swayed. When Helen, the maid (Claire Carleton), comes in to return a book Billie loaned her, Harry breaks up their conversation and tells Billie not to "get friendly with everyone." Billie, now on her feet, runs to a large dictionary to find the correct word for Harry—telling him he is "anti-social." This use of the dictionary gets repeated a number of times, emphasizing Billie's new desire to articulate herself in respect to Harry's silencing patriarchy. Now desperate to articulate her perspective, Billie uses her new education to empower herself.

This becomes even more crucial when Jim later arrives to have Billie sign another set of papers. Instead of complacently obliging with the request, Billie insists on reading the materials before signing them. Billie stalks from her room, and remains standing, glasses firmly fixed, rather than returning to the former image of sitting while Jim stands over her: "I like having things explained to me—I found that out." When Jim attempts to explain the mergers, Billie realizes that the papers are forming a cartel: "A cartel! Paul explained to me all about them, and well, I'm against them." The action returns to Billie's suite, and she begins to read the documents, and to look words up in the dictionary. As Billie hovers over her book, Cukor frames Harry coming from the servants' entrance on the staircase, directly above her. As they sit, she in the foreground, and he behind, looking over her, the image is haunting, as it recalls their last altercation:

Harry: Interesting?

Billie: Not very.

Harry: I suppose you're used to reading more high toned stuff...

Billie: I'm not sure I like you either.

Harry: Since when is all this?

Billie: Since now. I used to think you were a big man, Harry. But I'm beginning to see you're not. In history, there's been bigger men than you—and better.

Harry: Name one.

Billie: My father.

Harry: Twenty-five a week. Listen cutie, don't get nervous cause you read a book. You're as dumb as you ever were.

Billie: You really think so?

Harry: Yeah, but I don't mind. I like you dumb.

Cukor frames the action nicely here as Harry moves around nervously, and Billie remains seated, confidently speaking her mind. However, as Harry says this last line, Billie bolts, mentally and physically repulsed by his touch. She now tells him that she needs to get away from him "because I've never been like this!" As he bellows after her, Billie finds her voice:

I just know that I hate my life—there's a better kind, I know it. And, if you'd read some of these books, you'd know it too. Maybe you're right—I'm still dumb. But, I know one thing I never knew before—there's a better kind of life than the one I got. Or, you.

The fight does have its humorous moments: the repeated pausing while the maid enters, Billie's pausing to find the right word, even her own brands of home-spun logic: "If a man goes and robs a house, that's work too." The moment comes to a crisis when Harry resorts to insults and violence:

Billie: And, that cheap perfume you put all over yourself ...

Harry: Cheap? I own nothin' that's cheap except you.

Billie: You don't own me. Nobody can own anybody. There's a law that says—

Harry: What do I care what the law says? If I was scared of the law, I wouldn't be where I am.

Billie: Where are you?

Harry: All right, you've talked enough.

As he turns to tell Billie to sign the papers, he slaps her twice. It is a stunning image, and the framing of the shot is powerful as Billie crumbles to the table and reluctantly signs the papers. Billie's sobs and Harry's bellowing intensify the moment, and the comic exit line, Billie calling Harry "a big fascist," only rings true, given this intensely violent moment.

The following sequence is another poignant moment, moving the film toward its triumphant conclusion. Billie walks to the Jefferson Memorial, and a series of dissolves move her from the park to the base of the mighty statue. Here, she re-reads the words Paul read aloud to her before on their subsequent journey there: "I have sworn on the altar of God eternal hostility toward every form of tyranny over the mind of man." The subsequent close-ups of Billie registering the effect of these words now is spell-binding as she sees a way to use her brain to outfox Harry and win Paul. She devises the plan, with Paul's help, to retrieve the papers and sign the companies that she now rightfully owns over to Harry—one at a time, one per year. To this end, Billie orchestrates her own "revolution" and succeeds in achieving her new life. Naturally, the significant difference between the classic and the Hollywood literacy narratives is the outcome. Shaw ends his play by defying the romantic elements that he expected his audience to desire. Eliza does not remain with Higgins, nor do they marry. On the other hand, Billie puts her education to use immediately, first by exposing Harry for the fraud he is, and second, by running away with her instructor, Paul, to become Mrs. Verrell. Therefore, the protagonist achieves her goal through education and language acquisition because she obtains what she wanted at the outset—it does not matter that the object of her affection transfers, because she recognizes that she does not deserve the brutal banality of Harry. She now sees that she is worthy of the sophisticated sweetness of Paul's world.

In assessing his work of the 1950s, Cukor told Peter

Bogdanovich that he was greatly happy with the effect of his "invisible" technique.

I think human behavior, the human heart, is to me what is very dramatic and rather complicated; and, I think, interests and moves the audience. One can do very dazzling tricks—dazzling beauty and pyrotechnics—but unless the human heart is there I don't think it goes very deep. I can't imagine a picture that has made a great impression without that. (449)

Of course, this invisible quality, matched by careful performances, is what makes *Born Yesterday* such a successful literacy narrative.

After five nominations, Cukor finally won the Academy Award for filming Lerner and Loewe's musical version of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, *My Fair Lady* (1964). Interviewers repeatedly asked Cukor if he recognized this as a triumph, or as a "swan song," to which he usually replied with a fair amount of disdain:

Lambert: Would you say that *My Fair Lady* was more prepackaged than most of your films?

Cukor (bristling slightly): That's what you intellectuals are pleased to say. (240)

Bogdanovich: When you got the Oscar for *My Fair Lady*, I felt it was about time, and that it was typical of the Academy to give the award to the right person for the wrong picture.

Cukor: I think by and large the awards are quite just. I suppose *My Fair Lady* was a very impressive picture. Getting it might have been an accumulation because of others, but I think the Academy Awards are—in the last analysis—very just and very perceptive in a way ... I thought *My Fair Lady* was very well done. (462)

It is interesting to see that both Lambert and Bogdanovich question the artistry of the musical—in essence, labeling the film without analyzing it, so that it suffered the same fate Cukor's films have always suffered. However, now that we recognize Shaw's play as the proto-type of literacy narrative, it may serve now, in hindsight, to have been the perfect moment to bestow such an award on Cukor. As noted before, George Cukor's work has long been ignored by critics and theorists because it lacked the very stylish mark that distinguishes most directors. Looking at his films as literacy narratives, I hope, will assist us in not taking his direction for granted. The conscious, subtle care that Cukor took to highlight performances and to honor the text of the film should not continue to go unnoticed. Instead, my hope is that it enlightens us in recognizing that films made within the confines of the Hollywood system are much more complex than we might initially consider. In this respect, Cukor can be seen as the ultimate pedagogue, teaching us to read the delicate nature of studio films with a more careful eye—and with a sharpened sensitivity.

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A Domestic Trilogy

by Robert K. Lightning

In some ways my project is a familiar one: The themes I shall examine in three Hitchcock films—heterosexual relations, the family, the oppression of women—were treated throughout his career. What distinguishes three of his 1950s films—*The Trouble with Harry*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and *The Wrong Man*, released in succession between 1955 and 1957—is the specificity of the treatment: Each deals with the post World War II nuclear family. The statistics that emerge from this period and confirm the 50s as the definitive family values era are fairly well-known but statistics on marriages (94.1% of men and 96.4% of women of this generation married)¹ and births (25.3 per 1000 women in 1957 compared to 18.4 during the Depression)² tell only part of the story, for not only did everyone marry and reproduce, they followed remarkably similar patterns in numbers of children produced (in that distinguished documentary on the nuclear family, *Martha and Ethel*, one mother notes that “We had big families...no one had small families”) and even spacing of births. That the postwar economy was stimulated by this domestic orientation is evidenced by the 240% jump in sales of household goods³, the decade's biggest boom in consumer spending. Sixty percent of the population attained middle class income levels⁴ and most families were able to realize the American dream of home ownership, with a noteworthy increase in single family ownership⁵ (and with the rise in highway construction during this era, the Dream became increasingly a suburban reality). Americans directed their energies into constructing the paradigm of the 50s nuclear family as if mimicking univocally the claims of one survey respondent when she said that marriage (but this clearly holds for the entire nuclear unit) gave her a “happy, full, complete life...”⁶

But the 50s nuclear family was an aberration and its most lasting legacy might prove to be its symbolic function as representative of an era's apparently successful synthesis of economic and social stability with personal fulfillment. As Stephanie Coontz notes of this era:

In fact, the “traditional” family of the 1950s was a qualitatively new phenomenon. At the end of the 1940s, all the trends characterizing the rest of the twentieth century suddenly reversed themselves: For the first time in more than one hundred years, the age for marriage and motherhood fell, fertility increased, divorce rates declined, and women's degree of educational parity with men dropped sharply. In a period of less than ten years, the proportion of never married persons declined by as much as it had during the entire previous half century.⁷

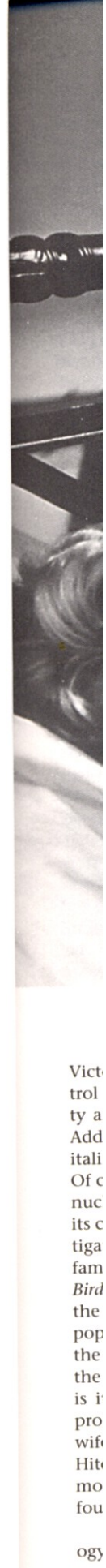
As she goes on to note the postwar populace that embraced the 50s nuclear construct recognized it as a new invention and approached

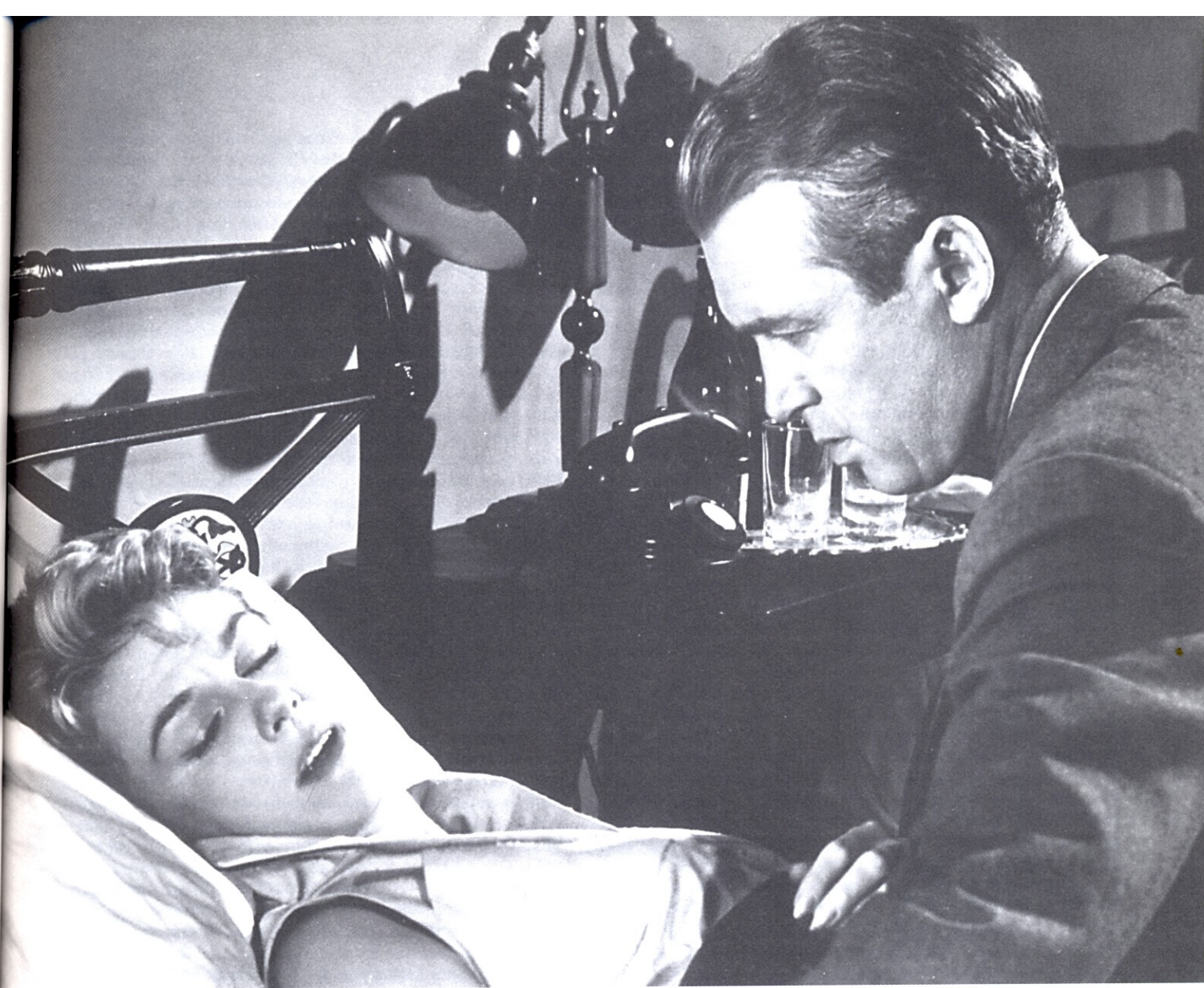
it as such. The experiment was in fact made possible by a unique confluence of artificial factors (that is, not in themselves necessitating the formation of nuclear families) the primary one being the postwar U.S. economy, which enjoyed an enormous international advantage when the European industrial powers had been decimated by the war. The economic stability of this period made possible various forms of government patronage, from housing loans (through the Federal Housing Authority) to new highway construction, salient factors directing the populace into the suburban nuclear paradigm.⁸

Although it provided the basis for their formation, the postwar economy does not totally explain the 50s nuclear family (after all, the postwar 20s saw a popular challenge to social conventions). The war itself provides further explanation. As with the Great Depression, World War II provided the opportunity for radical social and political transformation. Three demonstrable realizations of this potential become particularly resonant in the postwar years: The brief allegiance of the U.S. and Soviet Union, the dramatic influx of women into the wartime job market and the military and, finally, the growth of gay consciousness made possible by the social interaction of a large cross section of gays and lesbians in the military (a process hitherto restricted to America's metropolitan areas).⁹

War may have provided the impetus for social change but a massive challenge to ideological norms would be postponed until the 1960s. The immediate postwar era provides ample evidence instead of the attempted reversal of wartime political and social transformations: HUAC's Hollywood and State Department investigations, the return of women to domesticity and a “pink collar” labor force, the systematic persecution and dismissal of suspected gays and lesbians from the military and the civil service. The immediate response of the populace to the wartime emergency had been an attempt (backed by a wide range of cultural forces) to reinforce ideological norms (as is suggested by the dramatic increase in marriages early in the war)¹⁰. 1950s conservatism can be viewed then as a similar response to a new emergency: the possibility of death on a global scale as a result of nuclear annihilation. But it is also a response by powerful social and political forces to roughly two decades of social upheaval, the most immediate being the undermining of political, gender, and sexual norms as a result of the wartime emergency. The 50s family is the fulcrum for the first full scale, national attempt to enforce a rigid code of political, sexual and gender behavior, the chance of success enhanced by the opportune confluence of comparative political and economic stability. This in essence defines the “newness” of the 50s nuclear family.

The traditional characteristics of the nuclear family (rooted in





The Man Who Knew Too Much: coerced silence and potential violation.

Victorian era domestic arrangements) are ideally suited to the control of wartime ideological aberrations: Compulsory heterosexuality and monogamy, and the division of labor along gender lines. Additionally, the home becomes the central figure of a revived capitalist economy (recall the 240% increase in household spending). Of course, Hitchcock's interest in the family was not limited to the nuclear trilogy, but during this period it takes on the coloration of its contemporary embodiment. In addition to his customary investigation into the heterosexual couple, the problematic of those family films outside the nuclear trilogy (*Shadow of a Doubt*, *The Birds*) is usually situated in *extended* family ties. As a result both of the imperatives of postwar capitalism¹¹ but also of a prevailing popular desire to appear modern (i.e. fashionably divorced from the customs of the preceding generation) even while embracing the traditional, a defining characteristic of the 50s nuclear family is its *dissolution* of those ties. Thus in the nuclear family films, problems are situated firmly within the triumvirate of husband, wife and child(ren). (Ironically testifying to the expansiveness of Hitchcock's vision is the positive relationship of Henry Fonda to his mother in *The Wrong Man* which obliterates the tensions usually found in Hitchcock in the relationship of mother to adult child).

In terms of the heterosexual couple, each of the films of the trilogy confirms Hitchcock's concern not only with the oppression of

1. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, (BasicBooks, 1998)
2. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were* (BasicBooks, 1992)
3. *ibid.*, p.25
4. *ibid.*, p.24
5. *ibid.*, p.24
6. May, *op.cit.* p.29
7. Coontz, *op.cit.* p.25
8. *ibid.*, p.77 78
9. I have relied upon two fine film documentaries, *Before Stonewall* (Schiller, 1985) and *Coming Out Under Fire* (1994, based on the book by Allan Berube) for information on what ultimately cannot be revealed by statistics: The experience of lesbians and gays in the military during World War II. Although only the latter is centrally concerned with gays in the military, both documentaries (through interviews and personal testimonials) reveal the war as a contributing factor to the creation of the later Gay Liberation movement and hence to a modern gay/lesbian identity. The gay/lesbian experience of recognizing "others like themselves from other parts of the country" was the inevitable result of the formation of "the largest armed force in U.S. history", which included exclusively female units.
10. If, collectively, the WW II veterans interviewed regard their wartime experience with decided ambivalence, this perhaps derives from the military's response (contradictory at best) to their presence. On the one hand, midway through the war, military policy banning sodomy was amended to a ban on homosexuality itself. Male and female personnel could now be discharged for their *suspected* sexual identity rather than for a specific sexual act. As an example, however, of progressive utilitarianism (or utilitarian progressiveness) for a time the military attempted to accommodate a gay presence. For example a WAC sex hygiene film (excerpted in *Coming Out*) not only addresses the possibility of female camaraderie finding "sexual expression" but suggests treating the matter with "understanding". As noted this liberalism did not survive the war. As an example of postwar

women and presumptive male authority but the limits to human development (creative, sexual, psychic) within the nuclear structure. In *The Trouble with Harry*, the first film released of the trilogy, Sam/John Forsythe tells us in the song that introduces him that he is "homeward bound", though not from the war but the big city. This journey to small town America, the original seat of American family values, involves (as the song tells us) the acquisition of a woman, which Sam finds in the figure of a young widowed mother, Jennifer/Shirley MacLaine. His profession as an artist convinces her of his progressiveness ("You can see the finer things") and in fact he promises her freedom within their impending marriage, a resolution of extremes (marriage and female autonomy) that Hitchcock convinces us will be impossible owing to Sam's possessive and objectifyingly romantic view of women. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* makes explicit reference to the war (as do all the Hitchcock/James Stewart collaborations, an association of star and event already foregrounded by Stewart's own wartime military activity). The Hitchcock couple, now firmly entrenched in marriage (8 yrs.) and parenthood has journeyed to North Africa, site of the husband's past exploits, the very male exploits of his wartime years. Dr. Ben McKenna has also implicitly brought his wife (ex-Broadway star Jo Conway/Doris Day) to a site where her far reaching fame will perhaps be less pronounced (the moment they return to the West she is greeted at the airport by a host of fans). Developments in the Stewart persona and its association with a problematic postwar domestication allow Hitchcock here to highlight a phenomenon mentioned earlier: the substitution of wartime activity by masculine domination of the domestic sphere as a form of masculine definition. In the final film of the trilogy to be released, *The Wrong Man*, the family (now with two children) is returned to America and the American Home, now with the added burden of class and economic oppression. The sinister implications of the nuclear family are here underlined by Hitchcock in his presentation of the husband's late night return home, his approach to a darkened doorway and through a shadowy corridor recalling other approaches to sinister houses or rooms in Hitchcock. But for Manny Ballestrero/Henry Fonda the home proves his salvation, a safeguard. Hitchcock's sinister implications prove true however for his wife, Rose, for whom the home was initially a safeguard but becomes, during the course of the film, a trap from which an asylum provides the only escape (the remote setting of which strikingly recalls that of the vacation spot husband and wife return to during the course of the film).

Before moving on I would like to note the importance to these films of an essential element in the nuclear structure: children. Children within the family rarely appear in Hitchcock, although *childhood* and its lingering effects on his adult protagonists is a constant. Far more typical of Hitchcock is a later trilogy comprised of *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Marnie* which concerns itself with the residual effects of parenting on adults (we might group them as the "Oedipus" trilogy). Testifying to Hitchcock's concerns during this period the nuclear trilogy examines the effect the presence of children has upon *parents*. What their presence reveals about the family will be examined when discussing the individual films.

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

As the springboard for this article was Robin Wood's chapter on *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in his *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*¹², I will begin with it, the middle film of the trilogy. Wood reveals Hitchcock's feminist sympathies in his examination. As he notes, Jo McKenna has been (for all intents and purposes) forced from a successful stage career (as singing star Jo Conway) by her husband who, in doing so, effectively restricted her voice to the domestic sphere. The greater part of the film depicts his attempts to single-handedly rescue their kidnapped son, further restricting his wife's

voice by dismissing her assistance and intelligent observations. It is through singing star Day that Hitchcock most obviously develops a metaphor that runs throughout the trilogy: the voice as phallus, an expression of female power and autonomy. It is Day's voice, in fact, that proves the necessary tool to not only restore the child to the family but to prevent an assassination (by singing "Que Sera Sera", by screaming in the Albert Hall). Rather than restate what has already been succinctly expressed by Wood, I will examine other revealing aspects of the film. It has been commonplace to note the primary attachment of mother to son in the film. I would like to highlight a moment when that primary attachment gives way to more urgent demands. I will begin by noting that only two people express any non-political reservations (or moral qualms) that a man is about to be murdered: Mrs. Drayton and Jo. Mrs. Drayton's concerns are implied: throughout the cynical discussion of the assassination between her husband and the hired assassin, she tensely smokes a cigarette, expressing the fervent wish that "it were tomorrow" (or, in other words, that the deadly masculine political plot in which she is involved were over), her discomfort becoming quite apparent every time the clash of cymbals (signifying the moment of death) is heard. That this is at least in part concern for a human life is implied by the humanity already expressed through her concern for the comfort (later, the life) of the kidnapped child. Jo's "reservations" are expressed less obliquely and more successfully in the Albert Hall segment. Just prior to the assassination attempt, Jo is told mysteriously by the assassin that her child's safety will depend on her actions. As the moment of death approaches (and Jo determines an attempted assassination is in progress), we watch her suffer the most excruciating inner turmoil, the assassin's silencing threat linking him to that network of men (husband, spies, police) that attempts to silence Jo's voice. While granting a degree of ambiguity during the sequence (we cannot read Jo's mind, we can only guess at the verbal exchange between husband and wife when he arrives), what is clear is that for Jo, at some point, it becomes less a matter of whether to stop the murder than *how*, a dilemma she solves with her scream (she is later heard commenting "I knew I had to do something").

Jo's action contrasts revealingly with her husband's under similar circumstances. Told his son will be harmed if he contacts the police, Ben lapses into silence and secrecy. If one infers a greater concern for their son from Ben's cooperation with the conspirators, it is only apparent, as his concern is qualified by more self-serving desires. Ben's refusal to share the secret of the assassination plot and the obsessiveness with which he guards it make of it also a token of power, a phallus. That this phallus is a token of male privilege, signified by a license to manipulate and silence women is suggested by two details: it is passed to him by the dying Louis Bernard/Daniel Gelin (characterized from their first meeting by his attempts to silence Jo and evade her inquiries) and soon after sharing it with Jo, he incapacitates her with sedatives (thus rendering her incapable of revealing the secret of the phallus). Related to this, Ben's desire to single-handedly rescue the child allows him to play hero and establish more securely his hegemony in the family over the rival "father" represented by Jo (her power outside the home signified by her far reaching fame and within the family by her revolutionary legacy of music to the son, which threatens to undermine the traditional male to male legacy, here represented by Ben's desire that the boy become a doctor). As Jo's emotional turmoil during the Albert Hall segment makes clear, she is motivated primarily by a desire to preserve human lives (if her son's function as the receptacle of her creative energies suggests that her desire for his return is not entirely selfless, this at least derives from deprivation as opposed to Ben's desire to dominate).

Woman's position within the nuclear family will make clear the true heroism of Jo's scream in the Albert Hall, heroism defined by its radicalism. An essential element of the wife/mother's confinement in the home is not only the restricting of her interests to the

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home but the prioritizing of her commitments, a wife/mother's being primarily to her husband and children. Again this is in contrast to men whose priorities are more fluid and whose primary commitments are likely to be outside the home (and from westerns to *film noir* how often have we seen the hero leave the "little woman"—the *good* woman—behind to tackle affairs in the outside world?). This has been a fundamental tool used to divide women not only from other women but from the human community at large. The family's hegemony even supercedes a personal moral sense, even that apparently supported by society. We might evoke that quintessential postwar nuclear family film *The Reckless Moment*, specifically that moment when Lucia Harper/Joan Bennett discovers that an innocent man has been wrongly arrested for murder. Her initial desire to clear the man (she knows her own daughter is "guilty" but is willing to take the blame herself) is abandoned when it is suggested that her family will suffer if she is implicated: her home being her first priority (placed even before her own personal desires), she lets him take the rap. Viewed in this light, Jo's scream is not only the most radical action in the film but one of the most radically *humane* in cinema: by risking the possible loss of her own son's life to save a stranger from certain death, she not only challenges the primacy of a mother's love (which, as mythologized by patriarchy, has been compared to the instincts of a wild animal) but the primitive primacy of blood relations and, in doing so, (re)connects herself to the world community. It is hardly coincidental then that she is disrupting the world of global politics, defined throughout as not only male dominated but virtually *Oedipal* in its machinations: it is after all the personal ambition of a junior political figure to do away with the prime minister/father figure that generates the assassination plot. Jo's scream is matched by Mrs. Drayton's late in the film which challenges patriarchy in a similar fashion by undermining the primacy of marital relations to save the child to whom she has no familial connections.

JAMES STEWART: THE DEVIANT POSTWAR MALE

If I disagree with Wood's analysis it is with his elevation of Jo's importance (if I understand him correctly) over Ben's. Certainly Jo is the character with whom we most sympathize but the film is very much about them as a *couple*, those scenes not devoted to their joint efforts divided fairly evenly between their solo efforts. Put another way, the film charts Ben's progress from that point (not presented within the diegesis) where he forced Jo from the stage to the point (late in the film) where he requests she return to the world as "the famous Jo Conway" so as to restore the family. Influencing my reading of Ben (as well as the film as a whole) has been Deborah Thomas's fine essay "Film Noir: How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male" (*Cineaction* #13/14, Summer 1988). Thomas reads *film noir* as expressing the American male's ambivalence to his return to normalcy (i.e. domesticity) after experiencing the freedom and power afforded by World War II. As she puts it

The war and its conclusion provided crisis points which crystallized the contradiction in America's expectations of its men by imposing sudden and extreme shifts in the norms invoked. What was normal during the war such as close male companionship, sanctioned killing, and easier and more casual sexual behavior, all heightened by the constant possibility of one's own death became deviant in the context of postwar calm, though such elements lingered on in the *film noir* world as the focus both of longing and of dread. (pp. 18-19)

Clearly this relates to the wartime radicalism discussed earlier. The wartime nostalgia that Thomas notes is defined by its deviance from peacetime norms. It is precisely the point that at least two of the wartime norms noted—same sex emotional intimacy and casual sex—run exactly counter to two of the main tenets of the

nuclear family: compulsory heterosexuality and monogamy. The desire to undermine the restrictions of family life that underlies this nostalgia, however, generates an internal crisis within the male, for if marriage and family are lost, so too is patriarchal privilege.

Thomas interprets Ben as the film noir hero (in a *non* noir film) 10 years after this initial crisis of choice, still expressing ambivalence to domesticity. The possibility that Ben longs for a pre-marital freedom explains certain passing commentary: When Louis Bernard expresses regret that Jo no longer performs, Ben returns "I've often thought that myself". Ben has compensated for wartime feelings of potency and completeness by establishing a patriarchal authority over and attempted domination of Jo. His postwar masculine identity requires the firm establishment of Woman's difference, her complete *lack* of the phallus (or the public appearance of such). Hence, the requisite confinement of Jo (and the phallic voice) to the home.

The desire to control and manipulate women is a familiar component of the Hitchcock hero. The hero's underlying desperation and hysteria are particularly pronounced in Hitchcock's collaborations with Stewart, but this is as much a matter of developments in the Stewart star persona as it is a familiar Hitchcock concern. Stewart's persona came to represent perfectly the trauma of the post war male caught between America's conflicting images of manhood¹³, which, as noted, reaches crisis levels during this period. The postwar development of the Stewart image and the exploration of the American male's domestication made possible by that image, begins with his first postwar film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, the Capra film (the seminal postwar Stewart work) anticipating Stewart's remarkable work with Hitchcock and Anthony Mann

reaction the State Department adopted the military's eventual policy banning homosexuals. And in 1953 Executive Order 10450 extended this policy to all federal jobs.

10. May, op.cit. p.59

11. The crucial influence of capitalism upon the American family can be derived from these comments made by the late Andrew Britton on the war's effect on American capitalism, the specific institution of concern being the Hollywood studio system

"What the war did was to impose an extraordinary hiatus in the development of American capitalism: it postponed by about ten years that general social process in terms of which the Hollywood studio system was already becoming archaic and anomalous even as its characteristic institutions were being consolidated. We may describe this process as a movement towards an economy based on individual consumption and social relations characterised by the dispersal and atomisation of persons, who are located in "the home" and constructed as "consumers" by a variety of discourses and practices..." ("A New Servitude" *Cineaction* #26/27, Winter 1992, p.35); The postwar development of commercial television as well as the government's attacks on Hollywood (both the dismantling of its internal capital structure as well as the investigation of its personnel), an institution whose product depended upon social relations both communal and external to the home are suggestive in terms of a postwar drive toward "atomisation". Widely promoted by sociologists and psychiatrists, the nuclear family is the central figure of this schema and the effect of the nuclear family *as a form* (that is, Americans dispersed into ever smaller consumer units) upon the economy has been noted. The dissolution of extended family ties is the inevitable byproduct of this social process.

12. Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1989, pp.358-70)

13. Certainly the star that comes closest to embodying a prototype of American manhood during the classical era is John Wayne. Interestingly, during this period, Wayne's stoicism takes on those qualities of neurotic obsessiveness more associated with the Stewart persona, a result no doubt of the era's crisis of manhood to which Deborah Thomas alerts us. Thus the Stewart neurotic of *Rear Window*, *Vertigo* and the Mann westerns finds his twin in the Wayne of *Red River* and *The Searchers*. Even here however a distinction must be noted. The emotionalism that is a recurring aspect of the Stewart persona is completely foreign to Wayne. If Wayne's obsessive drives are thwarted, it results from a confrontation with an equivalent physical or moral force (*Red River*) or, barring that, from a change of heart that has none of the connotations of emotional collapse evidenced by Stewart's last minute change in *The Naked Spur*. The crucial issue is the relationship of the persona to the values of domesticity. As is evidenced by *The Searchers* the values Wayne represents are antithetical to the home and hence the Wayne persona is closer to myth than Stewart, who has generally internalized the values of home. It is his association with the domestic sphere, however denied, that determine Stewart's distance from the myth and define him, in this respect, as the un-John Wayne.

(remarkable in each case for the consistent elaboration of concerns made possible by an extended collaboration between director and star). Certainly George Bailey's determined wanderlust finds expression in the Mann Westerns, in the hero's pursuit of (as Douglas Pye notes in another splendid *CineAction* piece, much of which is as relevant to Stewart as to the Mann westerner) a "fantasy of independence" and an ideal of manhood that is a "fantasy figure of completeness"¹⁴. Of course, wandering is an explicit component of the Stewart/Hitchcock protagonist (*Rear Window*, *Vertigo*) but his wandering options are far more limited, and thus heterosexual settlement looms far more threateningly on the horizon. (He is the American male 50 years after the settlement of the American frontier already near completion in Mann's westerns has concluded). In Hitchcock the emphasis switches to heterosexual relations and the activation of the "masculine power/impotence syndrome" that Wood sees as often structuring the Hitchcock film and which is often expressed in the hero's attempt to control women (he sees Stewart as epitomizing this syndrome¹⁵). Thus, at the conclusion of the war, his wandering options over, Ben McKenna takes possession of Jo, gradually enclosing her in the role of wife/mother. Again, this is anticipated in the Capra film (although with much less emphasis on domination and with the woman's eager complicity): George Bailey, his wandering options exhausted, moves into marriage and heterosexual settlement (although initially viewed as an opportunity for heterosexual wandering) with an inevitability that suggests predestination.

Of even greater interest in anticipation of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (and to introduce the final component of the nuclear family, the child) is Capra's use of the Bailey children. At his lowest point, his reputation and his finances about to be ruined, George returns home and threatens to become that most horrific of monsters, an abusive father. In the midst of his bullying the children, his wife Mary rises swiftly to their defense, defusing his threat by ordering him from the home. Mary (like so many post-war women, a college graduate turned housewife) has of course formed a primary bond with the children, a bond born of necessity (they provide a viable, if limited, outlet for creative energy) and circumstance (she, confined to the home, is with them a lot). Clearly this anticipates Jo's bond to her son and just as clearly, this bond supercedes (when tested) the marital bond. The intensity with which Stewart conveys George's pain at Mary's rejection recalls the relationship's Oedipal roots. Put another way, the mother/child bond proves as formidable a barrier to the husband's control and possession of his wife as the father did to his possession of the mother (for whose loss possession of the wife is compensation) in the original Oedipal triangle.

Hitchcock makes clear the child's importance in the conversation on the bus with Louis Bernard. When Ben explains that his nickname for his wife ("Jo, short for Josephine—no 'e'") is the only name by which she is now known, the child chimes in that he knows another—Mommy. The child is thus both the castrated wife's compensatory phallus (replacing the name that, for Ben, signifies castration with another) and the repository for the creativity that has been circumscribed by the patriarch. Stewart's actions of course never suggest he wants to be rid of the child, but as the child is (so to speak) Jo's phallus, this is a logical aim. At the conclusion he must confront the logic of his desire through his double, Mr. Drayton, who for his part had achieved complete authority over his wife (that is, until their acquisition of the child, thus underlining the child's empowering effect on both women) and is at the end willing to kill the child over her objections. Drayton is brought to the point where he realizes killing the child serves no purpose and only wants to use him as a means to escape the embassy. Ben's preventing that escape is, then, not strictly necessary. It does however introduce another recurring component of the Hitchcock/Stewart collaborations. Although too complex to reduce to formula, the Stewart/Hitchcock text inevitably leads to



Jo belts out 'Che sera, sera'...

the hero's confrontation with a symbolic figure we might describe, broadly, as bearing a significant relationship to Stewart's castration fears. Both Lars Thorvald (of *Rear Window*) and Drayton are double figures that express the hero's desire to achieve phallic mastery, represented in both cases through their control of women (respectively, through the murder and manipulation of Woman). The killers of *Rope* and Judy of *Vertigo* are sexual others, who (because powerless under patriarchy) arouse Stewart's own fear that he too lacks the phallus, situated, as he is, ambiguously within the patriarchal order (that is, between wandering and settlement). His castration fears are additionally aroused by the Other's temporary assertion of power, represented in each case by the Other's involvement in murder (that there can be no clear cut division between the two symbolic groups is easily derived from *Rope*, where the killers are sexual others as doubles¹⁶). Despite any ambivalence, however, Stewart inevitably (re)establishes himself (by film's end) as the good bourgeois, a process that involves his denial of any relationship to the Other/double. Matters are considerably complicated by the obvious sympathy Hitchcock feels for the symbolic figure, a sympathy that is rooted in his recognition of the Other/double as desperate and victimized. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is the least troubling in this respect: as an oppressor of women, Drayton has little to recommend him. What does trouble and finally disallow the audience's full endorsement of the process of denial is Stewart's refusal to recognize his own ambivalence, his accession to bourgeois normality inevitably taking the form of a ruthless condemnation (if not attempted obliteration) of this symbolic figure (his "You're going to die!" to the young murderers of *Rope* is the hysterically extreme example). *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is perhaps the most positive in this regard: if Stewart does not acknowledge his own destructive desires, he does at least actively participate in the reestablishment of the family's primary relationship—mother to son—and in so doing accepts his own castrated position within the nuclear structure.

THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY

The relationship of the other two films of the trilogy is greater than either to *The Trouble with Harry* (I will examine the relationship in

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...Mrs. Drayton asks Hank if he can whistle the tune.

the next section). As my chief concern is its thematic relevance to the trilogy, my analysis of *Harry* will be less detailed than is perhaps warranted by the film. Despite its tenuous position within the trilogy *Harry* introduces two key themes that are developed later in the trilogy and thus testify to Hitchcock's concerns during this period: The woman's voice as phallus and the child within the nuclear family (the future nuclear family of Sam, Jennifer and Arnie).

Despite its recent reappearance in the 80s, *Harry* has not provoked the type of analyses that, say, *Vertigo* had even before its reemergence. As evidence I site the critical anthology *Hitchcock's Rereleased Films* (Wayne State Press, 1991, eds. Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnick) which devotes one chapter to *Harry* (as opposed to the four on *Vertigo*). In that one chapter Lesley Brill offers a promising reading, noting for instance the film's use of nature to express a theme of spiritual regeneration. Additionally, he goes on to note "the total exclusion of destruction from the world of the film". Unfortunately, he veers off into metaphysical descriptions of the film's concerns ("...the productivity of the dead and the fertile fluidity of time...") further attributing the film's tone to "a romantic vision of innocence and immortality which informs the greater part of [Hitchcock's] work" (p. 271), an interpretation that will, I think, surprise most of Hitchcock's admirers. Far more useful, it seems to me, is a comment on the film made by the late Andrew Britton¹⁷ (related to me in conversation by Robin Wood). Britton regarded the film as "a fantasy on the death of the Father". Such a reading allows not only the political interpretation of the film that Brill avoids but additionally a feminist reading of Hitchcock's appropriation of Shakespeare (to which Brill makes a brief reference), specifically the comedies. Take for instance Hitchcock's deployment of the natural world, (specifically Mansfield Meadows in the film), which functions in several Shakespeare comedies (as well as *The Winter's Tale*) not only as a space from which to escape an oppressive patriarchal figure but also as an alternative sphere where patriarchal norms are subverted, modified or challenged. Two aspects of *Midsummer Night's Dream* exemplify this symbolic function: 1) the young lovers escape from Athens to the forest to avoid Theseus' deadly edict against Hermia and 2) all of Oberon's attempts to assert patriarchal controls upon romance within the forest (through his minion

Puck) are disastrous. In *Harry* this metaphorical function is announced by the discovery of the deceased Harry who (like Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale*) was involved in a monstrous act that signifies the abuses of patriarchy (the abandonment of Perdita in Shakespeare, the attack on Miss Gravely in Hitchcock) and dies at the edge of this alternative sphere. Mansfield Meadows' symbolic function in *Harry* is further underscored by the behavior of other men within its borders: One man wanders absentmindedly through the forest for most of the film and two others ponder (to no avail) the perplexities of gender difference (significantly, the film's representative of patriarchal law, Calvin Wiggs/Royal Dano, is never seen in Mansfield Meadows). Additionally (as with Shakespeare's Rosalind) the rustic world provides the ideal space for transgressing gender norms/stereotypes as evidenced by the near fatal attacks upon Harry made by Jennifer/Shirley MacLaine and Miss Gravely/Mildred Natwick. I will return to this later.

One additional parallel with Shakespeare will clarify the specific realization in *Harry* of the Hitchcockian critique of contemporary domestic arrangements that characterizes the trilogy. Brill further describes the world of *Harry* as "Edenic" and "prelapsarian". But it is precisely the vivid depiction of the changing seasons in *Harry* (to which the film's admirers so often refer) that contradicts this assessment. For as the Duke Senior notes of the seasons' change within the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* ("Here feel we not the penalty of Adam, the seasons' difference?", Act II, Scene I), it is precisely the changing seasons that confirm the world of *Harry* as Eden after the fall. Patriarchal oppression (which we can equate with the destruction that according to Brill is absent from the film) has no more been abolished from *Harry* than from *As You Like It*: it has merely been temporarily abated. As a tyrannical monarch threatens at the edge of the Forest of Arden so too does male presumption threaten to erupt in *Harry* in the form of its two male protagonists.

The death of Harry, an oppressive patriarchal figure, as well as the subversion of the law through the concealment of the *corpus delicti*, signals a symbolic lull in patriarchal norms and, as a consequence, an opportunity for personal growth. Much is made in the film of the transforming effects of romantic love ("There's nothing like finding yourself in love!" as the Captain/Edmund Gwenn proclaims). But the two couples must negotiate their future relations against the threat of masculine presumption and masculine fears of female sexuality and autonomy. Ironically, the rebirth theme is more successfully achieved with the elder couple. This is surely a testament to Hitchcock's pessimism regarding the 50s nuclear fam-

14. Douglas Pye, "The Collapse of Fantasy" (*Cineaction* #29, Fall 1992, pp. 75-81).

15. Wood, op.cit. pp. 364-65.

16. *Rear Window* presents an even more complex relationship between Stewart and the double. Lars Thorvald is of course the film's obvious double figure, the film climaxing with a classic confrontation between hero and doppelgänger. But as critic Tania Modleski has noted (*The Women Who Knew Too Much*, Methuen Inc., 1988) equally strong parallels are established between Stewart and Mrs. Thorvald, their physical incapacity being only the most obvious. The narrative can be read as an account of Stewart's hysterical denial of otherness. The inconclusiveness of the evidence suggesting Mrs. Thorvald's death only helps support this: She must be dead for Stewart to establish decisively his difference, that he (unlike she, by virtue of her vulnerability to Thorvald) possesses the Phallus, a conviction made magnificently untenable by Hitchcock when Stewart becomes (like Mrs. Thorvald) a victim of Lars Thorvald's violence.

ily: unlike Sam and Jennifer (whose union, because of Arnie, automatically forms a nuclear unit) a union of the Captain and Miss Gravely, as it is less likely to produce children, is less likely to dissolve from the nuclear construct's inherent tensions. The Captain has formed a romantic ideal of Miss Gravely as prim and virtuous ("Well preserved" as he describes her, or in other words a virgin) which allows for his adoption of the corresponding masculine pose of "conqueror" (he notes wryly that "preserves" were meant to be opened). He develops, however, to a point where he is able to abandon cultural signifiers of sexual difference: He not only comes to accept Miss Gravely as a possible killer (and thus her transgression of ladylike behavior) but also reveals the lie of his own swash-buckling past (and it is at this point that Miss Gravely accepts him).

As for Sam, he doesn't develop very far, if at all, and it is through him that Hitchcock's pessimism is most thoroughly revealed. The Hitchcockian critique seems to have extended itself to the extradiegetic level of casting, John Forsythe giving the least engaging performance in an otherwise sterling comic cast. This is in contrast to Shirley MacLaine whose comic idiosyncrasies (in this her first film) are already confidently in place and here expressive of her character's unusually frank sexuality.

Sam is characterized as unconventional and non conformist. He is a naturalist (he tells time by the sun), anti-capitalist (he trades his paintings to a millionaire for goods rather than money) and (as his criticism of Calvin Wiggs suggests) anti-authoritarian. He subverts in fact all contemporaneous standards of masculinity save one, the sexual. Sam's relations with women are colored by romantic idealism, objectification, and potential repressiveness. His first encounter with Jennifer, proposed as an attempt to acquire information for the Captain, actually turns into an interrogation of her sexual past (Jennifer revealing, in highly coded dialogue, that Harry her husband had enormous sexual fears and was possibly impotent). Sam's romantic idealism relates him to a long line of Hitchcock protagonists in that it is expressed as a desire to "remake" Woman (compare not only the famous examples of *Vertigo* and *Marnie* but *Under Capricorn* and *The Paradine Case*, the latter two associating the masculine impetus with redemption and rescue of Woman).

Sam's romantic idealism is evident throughout. He misses an opportunity to sell his paintings when he insists, condescendingly, upon giving Miss Gravely a "romantic" beauty makeover (later the Captain will object when Sam proposes to make a gift of a beauty parlor to Miss Gravely). There is also a symbolic aspect to this impulse, as the repeated burials of Harry, functioning as symbolic denials of Jennifer's sexual past (in conjunction with his later antagonism toward Arnie) make apparent. Most suggestive is Sam's request to the millionaire for a double bed (in lieu of cash), a request that immediately links Sam to the oppressive husbands of the trilogy. It is through Sam that Hitchcock introduces into the trilogy this primary metaphor for oppressive gender relations, a metaphor that operates throughout Hitchcock's melodramas (literally from *Rebecca* to *Marnie* during his American period). Hitchcock here crystallizes the dichotomy between the unconventional and the profoundly conservative that is characteristic of Sam, a dichotomy that is only apparent, the request for the bed (seemingly indicative of both sexual liberation and an anti-capitalist privileging of use value over the symbolic value of cash) in actuality masking a desire to control Jennifer (the bed in Hitchcock being consistently associated with the oppression of Woman rather than her sexual pleasure). I will examine the symbolic bed at greater length when discussing *The Wrong Man* but given what transpires in the trilogy upon beds and in bedrooms (hysteria and drug-induced prostration in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, madness in *The Wrong Man*) Sam's apparently liberated request, despite the genially comic tone, cannot be taken lightly.

To counter masculine oppression Hitchcock again provides

Woman with the phallic voice, realized here in Shirley MacLaine's last minute monologue in which she reveals (to the town's baffled doctor) the truth of the day's events. This apparently extraneous recital of events in fact alludes again to Shakespeare, specifically to Rosalind's usurpation of the Epilogue's function in *As You Like It* ("It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue...") The expression of the phallic female voice at this point seems particularly significant. Not only does it express Jennifer's autonomy and personal integrity (frankness being her most distinctive character trait) but it does so in the face of threatening patriarchal forces: Not only has Jennifer accepted Sam's proposal but Harry's body will soon be discovered by a representative of the law, signalling a return to patriarchal norms.

Hitchcock's use of the child Arnie/Jerry Mathers relates suggestively to the implications of the father-son relationship of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. I have already discussed the threat the child poses to the father's hegemony in the later film. Here, there is an additional threat. Arnie is introduced to us as part of a composite monster, his startled head visually connected to Harry's dead body. Both of course represent Jennifer's sexual past and thus can only be seen as "monstrous" to Sam, the future patriarch of the future nuclear family (Arnie further trumpets Jennifer's sexual past to the world, as Hitchcock suggests visually, through his constant companion, a dead rabbit). The anxiety over Jennifer's sexual past (at root the male's fear of inadequacy when compared with the woman's other sexual partners, a fear that inspires, for instance, Devlin's abusive behavior in *Notorious*) relates Sam suggestively to Harry, whose impotence was possibly engendered by Jennifer's pregnancy (the child fathered by Harry's late brother) at the time of their marriage.

What is of particular interest is that in *Harry* the patriarch's antagonism toward the child is expressed overtly. Significantly, Sam begins referring to Arnie as a "little creep" after he takes possession of Jennifer (i.e. after she accepts his proposal). Earlier Arnie was the necessary pretext for Sam to gain access to Jennifer (he traded Arnie a live frog for his dead rabbit) but his inability to communicate with the child was pointedly juxtaposed with mother and child's easy rapport. What is here expressed overtly could only be suggested in the followup film (and there only through the use of a double). The explicit antagonism is allowed possibly by the fact that 1) Sam is not the boy's biological father, 2) the film is a comedy and thus Sam's comments can be dismissed as joking and 3) John Forsythe is not (unlike James Stewart) an established Hollywood commodity.

THE WRONG MAN

I would like to approach this film somewhat differently, highlighting first those elements that set it apart from or are more pronounced here than in the other films of the trilogy. This approach will, I hope, define both its achievements and limitations.

Economics, class, capitalism. These are introduced as major concerns in the film's credit sequence (following Hitchcock's prologue). We are shown first the exterior of the famous Stork Club, then its crowded dining and dance areas. In a series of slow dissolves the club is gradually depleted of its expensively dressed customers (as Bernard Herrmann repeatedly undercuts his dance theme with a more somber theme), the final dissolve ending on a shot of the now nearly empty club, a waiter discreetly waiting to present the bill to the club's sole remaining customers. A cut reveals the film's star, Henry Fonda, on the club's band stand, playing the bass. The Stork Club is here presented as the site of class privilege, the expensively dressed patrons waited upon by club employees, their privilege based on the possession of capital. Manny/Fonda is barred from this privileged world, not so much as an employee but (it is eventually revealed) by lack of capital. (The Stork Club as symbol of democratic capitalism is wonderfully



The Wrong Man: the underdog surrounded by the protectors of capitalist interest

revealed by Manny's description of it later to the cops: there is no admission charge—that is, it's open to everyone—but once you get there, everything is so expensive). Manny's position outside the world of privilege is further underlined in his after work visit to a diner. There, although *he* is waited upon and served, it is less a matter of job requirement than from friendship and familiarity. (This impression of class solidarity, expressed here by the blurring of the division between customer and worker, is further enhanced by a small detail late in the film: it is the junior police detective who had the menial task of escorting Manny through the penal system up to his incarceration who not only takes the time to investigate after noting the villain's resemblance to Manny, but also greets Manny upon his return to the police station).

Of particular interest is the illumination of capitalist oppression by Hitchcock's feminist concerns, specifically in the character of Rose. The film's great irony is, of course, that although it is Manny who is directly assaulted by capitalism (the State's legal and penal systems here functioning to protect capitalist interests) it is *Rose* who cracks under the strain. But it is exactly at this point that patriarchy intersects with capitalism to elevate men and further oppress women, for if Manny possesses little, he does, as patriarch, have "legal possession" (as Marnie puts it a few films later) of Rose, whose identity (subjected to this possession) is completely tied up in being his wife: what he suffers she suffers, although with no patriarchal compensation. During the course of the film we see Manny's sense of identity severely shaken by his arrest. Rose's identity, subject to the stability of his position, shatters. The wife's lack of a fully developed and separate identity is further suggested by an apparently insignificant detail when Manny and Rose search for witnesses to corroborate Manny's story. Visiting the LaMarca apart-

ment, they discover from the current tenants that Mr. LaMarca has died. And Mrs. LaMarca? They don't know what became of her.

The Law. This is introduced as soon as Manny leaves the Stork Club. In the club, Manny's actions are restricted (we can deduce) by the club's regulations regarding dress, deportment, etc., his conscription guaranteed by his need of capital. Once he leaves, his actions are unguarded and his need for money might lead to other forms of behavior. Thus our first sight of the police occurs as soon as he leaves work: two dark shadowy figures surround him (an image repeated later as Manny is driven about in the police squad car). The suggestion that the law functions to protect the economic haves from the individual have nots is transformed for the majority of the film into an exploration of its systemic manifestations, specifically its judicial and penal systems. The sense we are given from the police investigation (where in a crude attempt at objective analysis, a senior officer's repeated mispronunciation of the word "drawer" as "draw" produces the evidence that helps implicate Manny) to the court trial (where the prosecutor falsely describes Manny as a gambler in debt to bookies) is that someone be punished for the violation of a capitalist institution and one oppressed person is as good as another.

As is made explicit in another Hitchcock film centrally concerned with the law, *The Paradine Case*, Manny is precisely one of those "underdogs" (as Mrs. Paradine puts it) that the law exploits in support of an insidious class system. Hitchcock's exposition of Manny's lock up (and it is good to remember here Hitchcock's often expressed fear of the police and incarceration) and his trial is

17. To my knowledge, the late Mr. Britton never wrote on *Harry*. Therefore the reputation of this estimable writer should in no way be subjected to criticism due to any conclusions I have drawn from this one comment he made regarding *Harry*.



The Wrong Man: Manny and his bass: a fully developed and separate identity.

full of fascinating detail. Again Hitchcock establishes parallels between these concerns and his feminist concerns, between Manny's entrapment and that of the housewife. I will return to this later.

Religion. A matter of concern to critics, since the film's release, has been Hitchcock's seeming investment in miracle and the power of prayer, this investment contradicting his characteristic pessimism as well as his usual investment in concrete action (see for instance his criticism of the Canada Lee character's exclusive reliance on prayer in *Lifeboat*). The attitude toward prayer here is more refined than it might at first appear. Again, Hitchcock's feminist concerns are illuminating here. To begin, if a prayer is answered, we might ask whose? In the kitchen scene preceding the revelation of the true culprit, Manny admits to his mother that he has prayed, but a moment later expresses the very un-Christian desire for a little "luck". As Manny leaves the room, the mother's lips move silently in (presumably) an impassioned plea directly to God or a representative being, in contrast to her son who mouths a restrained, silent prayer to a conventional and commercial *image* of Christ. If a prayer *should* be answered it is that of the mother, the true believer (although it probably is not: the mother has just asked Manny to pray for *strength*, but with the discovery of the real criminal, he gets the *luck* he had desired). Hitchcock's sympathy for the faith of this world's most oppressed is further suggested in the Ambrose Chapel scene of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, through Mrs. Drayton's look of reproach as Mr. Drayton deigns to lecture to an almost entirely female congregation on the subject of adversity and further suggests that *they* "do a little stocktaking". The congregation's evident surprise and presumed disappointment at not getting their weekly sustenance from the Good Book are a telling

commentary on Drayton's apparently radical politics.

Despite his sympathy for the unquestioning faith of oppressed women, Hitchcock places his faith in the concreteness of solutions to be found in *this* world. What appears to be an answered prayer (realised cinematically by Hitchcock by superimposing the soon to be arrested criminal's face over Manny's as he prays) is undermined by subsequent events. Thus Manny, cleared of all charges and convinced all has been made right by the apparent miracle, or at least convinced that he and Rose are indeed "lucky" (as he told her near the film's start, thus implying his faith in the patriarchal capitalist system), runs smack into Rose's clear-eyed vision of tenacious capitalist oppression (to his offer to remove her from the asylum and take her home, she replies "Doesn't matter where I am, where anybody is") and male privilege (to his news that he has been cleared she responds, "That's fine for *you*. Fine!") It is *her* reality with which Hitchcock concludes the film. A now dejected Manny's final comment makes clear Hitchcock's investment in the concreteness of political solutions: "I guess I was hoping for a miracle". (The "uplifting" text that concludes the film by telling us that Rose, fully recovered, rejoined her family two years later, was contradicted by Hitchcock himself some years later in the Truffaut interview book when Hitchcock, commenting on the real life Rose's commitment to an asylum, remarked, "She's probably still there").

Feminism and Working Women. Hitchcock's feminism is here more problematic than in the other films of the trilogy in that here he explores an actual alternative to woman's oppression within marriage. This exploration reveals the problem of the artist who is doubly bourgeois: that is, one who works within a medium (the Hollywood cinema) that is governed by bourgeois tenets (e.g., the

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Production Code) but who also has a personal investment in the bourgeois structure of the nuclear family. In his analysis of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Robin Wood attributes Jo Conway's positive qualities (her activeness and assertiveness, her insight, her positive relationship with her son) to the fact that she had (and wishes she still had) a career (unlike the generally negative and/or neurotic mothers of Hitchcock's American period, women who are undefined outside their roles as mothers). Hitchcock's characterization of Rose Balestrero, who possesses none of Jo's positives, confirms this idea. One sequence makes the point succinctly. Manny and Rose, frustrated in their attempts to locate witnesses to testify to Manny's innocence, are presented in their kitchen. Manny (while preparing to go to work) tries to break through Rose's wall of irrationality while she (the symptoms pointing to her breakdown becoming clearer) putters about the kitchen. The scene dissolves into a sequence of two shots: the first repeating the now familiar interior view of the Stork Club, the second, a shot of Manny among the band members, the shot ending on a close up of his bass fiddle. The point here seems to be that Manny, although his creativity is restricted not only as a club employee but as a band member (as opposed to band leader), not only has an opportunity to lose himself in matters that are less pressing than those that threaten his family life, but also has a fully established identity (musician) beyond his role as family man. Rose, with no such outlet, cracks under the strain.

The problem for Hitchcock, the bourgeois artist, is in depicting a workable alternative. This is suggested in his presentation of women in the work force which Hitchcock seemingly promotes as the logical alternative to Rose's situation. The realist in Hitchcock, of course, doesn't allow this depiction to suggest untrammelled expression. Thus, the first images of working women we see (the employees of the insurance company) describe desperation, potential danger, and entrapment (the teller shot by Hitchcock through the bars of her window, the women who think Manny is a hold up man, trapped in their open work area, unlike their male boss, protected in his adjoining office). The image of entrapment continues with the secretary in the law office presented initially as backed into a corner by her desk. (These images link to images of both Rose and Manny as entrapped to suggest the oppression of an entire class of people).

Hitchcock's empathy for working women is somewhat contradicted by the presentation of the two female tellers who wrongly identify Manny as the hold-up man, one neurotic and fearful (understandably, but this may be clouding her judgement), the other smug and self-confident. These two in turn are countered by the two working women whose actions do most to clear or attempt to clear Manny: the woman at the Cornwall Hotel (whose memory and intelligence serve to produce a list of witnesses to Manny's innocence) and the valiant woman in the deli who helps capture the real criminal. These two are further linked by the fact that they not only work but work with their *husbands*. It seems more than coincidence that this is precisely the relationship (hardly a workable situation for all working women) that Hitchcock the bourgeois patriarch shared with his own wife, Alma Reville. (One should note that while the wife emphatically undermines the husband's heroics throughout *The Man Who Knew Too Much* it is their joint effort at the conclusion that saves their son).

The relationship of *The Wrong Man* to *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is greater than either to *The Trouble With Harry*, the relationship being that of companion piece (as the respective "man" in their titles might suggest). The relationship is built on a series of oppositions: black and white photography vs. color, documentary exposition of drab New York locales vs. documentary exposition of exotic Morocco, oppressed working-class ethnic protagonists vs. upper-middle-class WASP heroes, inert housewife vs. active, ex working mother, defeat vs. triumph. The dark tone that the former elements express are surely linked to the fact that Hitchcock's pro-

tagonists are here working-class. It seems appropriate to emphasise this again at this point before examining more closely the components of the nuclear family: if Manny and Rose are ultimately defeated, Hitchcock has burdened them with far more oppressive problems of economics, class and ethnicity.

Manny Balestrero is one of the most difficult characters in cinema to criticise. He is from first to last an oppressed and exploited person. Put another way, if James Stewart is the un-John Wayne, Manny is the un-Ben McKenna and this is emphasised in parallel scenes where each man challenges officialdom. When in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* Ben's integrity (as well as that of the U.S. government) is challenged by a French police official, Ben's angry response (backed by a threat to contact the American Embassy) not only disrupts the interrogation, but reverses the power dynamics in his favor. Manny also challenges authority during his lengthy encounter with the police (during which, among several humiliating occurrences, he is made to parade before various victimized store owners, Manny acquiescing to even *their* demands), the release of tension when he finally explodes conveyed by a reverse track. His energy is swiftly re-contained and his impotence re-established by the police. Dr. McKenna's power and Manny's impotence are of course, products of their respective positions within the American class/economic system. As upper middle class WASP we should expect that Dr. Ben McKenna would be somewhat empowered by it and that Manny (working class ethnic minority) be victimized. Despite his victimization, it is here that we might begin to formulate a critique of Manny, for it is his compliance with the system (which he never questions) that allows for his easy exploitation. (A surreptitious message regarding U.S. postwar hegemony might also be interpreted from the nationality of the films' respective investigators suggesting that Manny, as a U.S. citizen, has less power against authorities within his own country than Ben does against foreign authorities).

Determining just what makes Manny "wrong" is made further possible by the parallel victimization of an even more oppressed person, his wife Rose. Remembering that if nothing else he is the family patriarch we can view his firm, father-like "We'll borrow it" (in response to Rose's query as to how they will acquire money to pay for her dental work) as the cause of all subsequent developments and not simply because it places Manny in the loan company to be falsely identified. Manny's compliance with the ways and means of capitalism (for instance, borrowing on the installment plan which keeps his family perpetually in debt) contributes significantly to his wife's instability (in the first bedroom scene, his list of all the things that make them as a couple "lucky" is countered by her detailed account of the financial trap they are about to re-enter). But this is not a realization he arrives at during the film. Thus Hitchcock subjects Manny (as family man already feminized) to a process of feminization. Part of what gives those scenes depicting Manny's incarceration (roughly from the moment the police decide to book him) their impact is their striking resemblance to Rose's situation: from his finger-printing to his final release on bail, Manny's dilemma suggests that of the housewife, both situations characterised by entrapment, dissipation of identity and loss of autonomy. His two lock ups (in the holding cell, in his permanent jail cell) either recall or anticipate images of Rose's entrapment. The image of Manny just before his release on bail, reduced to a miniature, framed by the slot in his cell door, recalls his final image of Rose as he was driven away in the squad car, viewed in miniature through Venetian blinds, framed by the kitchen window. More powerful still is Manny's lock up in the holding cell. The cell itself recalls the Balestrero bedroom (where we first see Rose), both tightly enclosed spaces with beds positioned close to walls (both additionally anticipating Rose's sanitarium room). Additionally the rotating image of Manny in the cell (conveying his barely controlled delirium) anticipates Rose's bedroom mad scene, his gesture of tightly clasping his empty hands

mirroring Rose's impotent gesture of self-comfort, her perpetual clapping/massaging of her own arm (the first teller we see in the insurance company is also seen massaging her fingers as Manny approaches). By the time the actual criminal has been caught, Manny's words mimic Rose's expressions of guilt and self doubt ("You'd all be better off without me"). At the conclusion, Hitchcock leaves him to determine his future minus Rose, who as someone he oppresses economically (and it is implied, sexually) is an essential element in his constructed identity as patriarch.

It is revealing to examine Rose in terms of the voice, a symbol that resonates with accumulated associations throughout the trilogy: the voice as Woman's weapon against containment, the voice as symbol of power. Poor Rose Balestrero at the conclusion has lapsed into almost complete and stony silence, the reluctance to vocalise proving a barrier (though a negative one) to her husband's possession. But even when asserting her voice, it lacks any force, as her desperate conversation with the lawyer's wife makes clear ("If I could just think where to begin"). The potential danger to the silent, non-assertive woman and the saving power of the voice are realized visually in the famous Albert Hall sequence in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. There, having been silenced by the assassin's threats, Doris Day is reduced to helplessly watching the transpiring events, the image of her anxious watching juxtaposed with shots of the assassin and his intended victim. As the assassin prepares, his gun is presented in huge close up, emerging from behind a curtain. A close-up of his victim reveals a bright red sash (at which the assassin is aiming), the red matching Day's lipstick. The sequence ends with a huge close-up of Day's screaming mouth as she disrupts the aim of the phallic weapon. The color coding (red sash, red lipstick) and juxtaposition of shots suggests the assassination is potentially as much a violation of Day as the intended victim and the sexual symbolism should be obvious. The correlation of coerced silence with symbolic sexual violation links this sequence to the earlier bedroom sedation scene where husband silenced wife by compelling her to take sedatives. That scene ended with Stewart hovering over Day in bed, fervently kissing her hand (Hitchcock's habitual sympathy for oppressed women dictating the camera placement so that Stewart hovers over us). The supreme irony that this, their most intimate, indeed most passionate encounter should entail a grotesque personal violation of the wife could not be more powerfully realised, the bedroom setting and Stewart's behavior underlining the potential for sexual violation (we might interpret Day's scream in the Albert Hall as her un-drugged response to Stewart's oppression).

The Wrong Man extends this theme (silence/compliance = oppression/violation) to the concept of marriage's requisite sexual relations, the couple's three bedroom scenes implying this requirement as an essential element contributing to Rose's breakdown. Of course, this is most explicit in the second bedroom encounter where Rose withdraws from Manny's touch and strikes him with a hairbrush. And in the third, Rose (in conjunction with her female nurse) ejects Manny from her asylum bedroom, a room she no longer has to share, thus in which the imbalance of power within marital sexual relations has been obliterated. The groundwork for their later bedroom encounters is laid in the first, where Manny represses an instinctive desire to undermine the financial system that perpetually oppresses him (implied by his thoughtful glance at the newspaper containing the horse racing results, the acquisition of capital without working undermining the mechanics of capitalism that perpetually oppress him) and instead nuzzles Rose erotically as she attempts to sleep. Clearly the power and freedom from constraint implied by the act of betting (for this compliant family man and worker) is transformed into erotic desire. Power is thus acquired and expressed through his sexual oppression of Rose who, for her part, had requested he sit with her until she slept (as opposed to requesting he lie down

with her, thus implying an already existing desire to escape requisite sexual relations). Rose's later recoil from Manny derives logically from this scene's implications.

Rose's anger and resentment are finally vented in what can reasonably be described as her mad scene, the couple's second bedroom encounter. As noted, her anger is directed at Manny's sexual oppression (the blow to the head) and financial oppression ("You always wanted to buy things on time. I told you not to"). Interestingly, her declaration that Manny *might* be guilty of the robberies suggests less a genuine belief that he is than a desire that he *should* be, her reiterated declaration ("You could be, you *could* be!") an attempt to impress upon him an 'alternative' means (robbery) to financial security that he would never consider. But Rose's rebellion against the capitalist system is there in the first bedroom encounter, where she (outwardly joking) suggested that Manny acquire cash through betting.

By scene's end, her anger has been reinternalised, reestablishing itself as guilt and self-condemnation ("You're right Manny, there *is* something wrong with me"). What Rose essentially cannot do is resolve the divided image of Manny represented by the cracked mirror reflection: "good" family man (according to society's evaluation) and oppressor (less a reflection of Manny than inevitably inherent in the constructed role of patriarch). Unable to resolve society's estimation with her own experience of domesticity, she becomes "wrong" rather than Manny, or better yet, the nuclear structure. As noted, at the conclusion, Hitchcock provides her with a victory of sorts: not only is Rose provided asylum from Manny's sexual imposition, but she is provided for (of necessity) unrestrainedly, Manny's acquiescence to the necessary financial provisions inadvertently and belatedly acknowledging his oppression of his wife ("I want her to have the best there is").

I will conclude this section, as the others, with a look at the children of the nuclear family. One of the most unusual scenes in Hitchcock follows Manny's release from jail where, in the bedroom of his home, the deep bond between Manny and his elder son is revealed. The scene is unusual within the Hitchcockian family, not least of all for its explicitness ("Dad, you're the best dad ever"). In an earlier scene, Manny had been able to successfully resolve a conflict between his two sons with remarkable evenhandedness. This is in striking contrast to Rose's failure as peacemaker or disciplinarian (in more than one scene she is heard ineffectively trying to quiet the boys). She seems almost superfluous to their emotional lives. If Manny's bond to his son reminds us of anything, it is ironically the relationship of mother to son in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the common use of music (the shared song in the earlier film, the promised music lesson in the latter) to establish and express that bond underlining the connection. (Additionally the intimate bedroom encounters between parent and child in both films contrast markedly with ugly bedroom encounters between husband and wife). The reversals of the two films are again revealing: if Jo has made Ben's position in the family somewhat superfluous, Manny has done the same to Rose, her role being essentially that of housekeeper and cook (as far as her children are concerned). Hitchcock's basic concerns might be restated thusly: necessary to the growth and establishment of the healthy psyche is the means for expression of individualness (even in group efforts), hopefully in imaginative or creative endeavors, this being necessary not only to the healthy ego, but to productive parenting.

This essay owes a great deal to a pair of books that provide an effective response (through a thorough examination of the realities behind the mythology surrounding the post World War II family) to recent attempts to revive the 50s nuclear construct: Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were* (BasicBooks, 1992) and Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* (BasicBooks, 1988)

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"Your Father's Method of Relaxation"

Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*

by Tony French

(for Robin, with love)

Shakespeare's *Henry V* is two plays, one of which, the grimly unglamorous exposé of the sordid reality that really lies behind the "pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war," subverts the other, the conventional patriotic *Boys' Own Paper* play, to such an extent that in order to preserve the patriotic reading a director (whether of film or of theatre) must simply cut away the doubts and questionings, the seediness and disillusion, and present the resultant castrato as the "real" Shakespeare. This is exactly what Laurence Olivier did in his abominable film; and even Kenneth Branagh (who didn't have the excuse that "there's a war on") balked at some of King Henry's more sadistic threats.

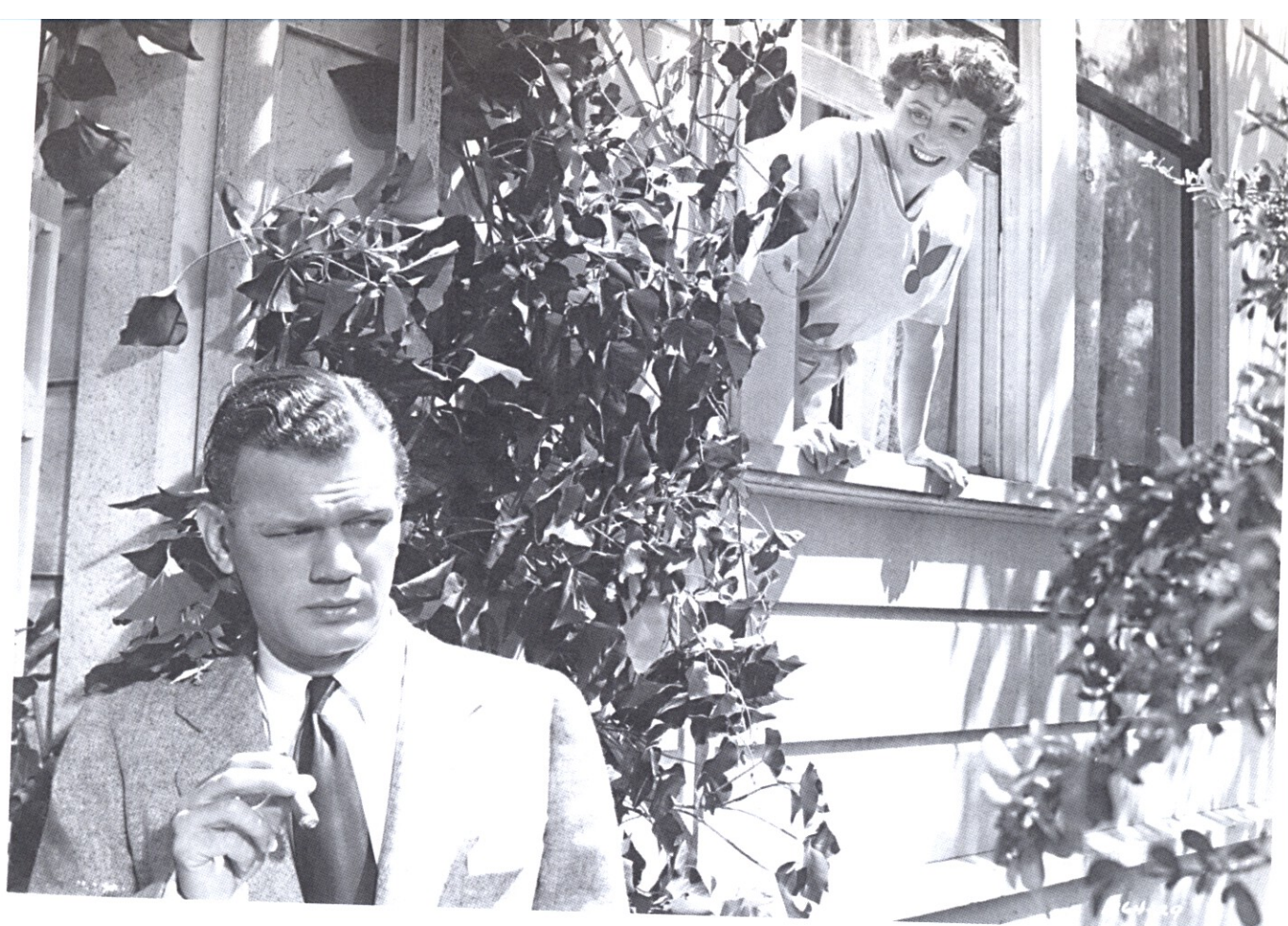
Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) presents an analogous case, with the difference that the two "parts" or aspects of the film are so perfectly integrated that no neatly ruinous surgery could be performed. Made when there was indeed a war on, the film looks at first glance (and in 1943, no doubt, on subsequent glances also) as though it is a vindication of American small-town values against the vicious moral emptiness of the psychopathic intruder, a serial killer. Or, in more general terms, it looks as though it is a vindication of decent "democratic" values concerning the family and the wider community against the attack being mounted on them by the S.S. and the Knights of Bushido. The family and the community of Santa Rosa are, one might very well feel, presented warmly and affectionately though not, of course (for this is Hitchcock country), without touches of wry humour, sufficient to suggest that the film is not taking these very ordinary people to be saints or heroes: the screenplay is partly by Thornton Wilder, author of *Our Town*, that middlebrow classic, and he also made a special "contribution"—unspecified—to the production.

The film's opening economically establishes a contrast (or so it seems) between, on the one hand, the bleak city landscape with its long cantilevered bridge, the kids playing in mean streets, the noisy lodgings where Charlie/Joseph Cotten* is lying on the bed next to his bedollared bedside table, his nosy landlady and, with a wonderful crane shot, the urban waste land through which he escapes from the detectives, and, on the other hand, the prosperous, leafy, bustling, caring community of Santa Rosa, with its orderly citizens crossing pedestrianly at the behest of an avuncular policeman—a town into which, to the joy of Charley/Teresa Wright, Uncle Charlie is to erupt at the very moment when she's about to summon him—a naive Faust about to bring a Mephistopheles whose menace she can't even begin to imagine.

Yet this contrast between the fragmented non-community and

the integrated one is more apparent than real. Santa Rosa's problems begin where most problems begin—in families. No film can ever have concerned itself more continuously, almost obsessively, with *The Family*. Our first glimpse of the Newton family's life is when (after a brief glimpse of Charley lying on her bed in the same posture as her uncle) the 'phone goes and the twelve-year old Ann, lost in her book, unwillingly answers it, showing an odd absence of affect about receiving a telegram and no interest whatever in taking it down, though telegrams in a small town in California in 1943 must have been rare enough, especially in a family where the father doesn't even own a wrist-watch. Young Ann has obviously fled from life to books, and receives her father's slightly tentative kiss, when he gets home from work at the Bank, with a certain steely resolve, as if it were a 'flu shot (marvellous direction here). Then Charley, when he goes up to say hello, at once starts anatomising their family—it's just "gone to pieces... nothing happens... no conversation, just talk." The script here, and Teresa Wright's admirable acting, leave us poised in doubt as to whether her feelings are just youthful *ängst* (and one wonders whether she is at college, working, or just waiting for a man) or whether she is unknowingly enunciating some deeper truth, of which the rest of the family remain unaware... save that her mother (Emmy/Patricia Collinge) constantly and with moving brilliance registers a deep woundedness about which we find out little till a few moments from the end. (Cf. Collinge's performance in *The Little Foxes*.) Yet after the father's response to his younger daughter and to his wife, we can't help feeling that perhaps this "average American family," as it will later be called with consummate irony, is—though not violent or overtly abusive—abysmally dysfunctional.

It is plain, when Uncle Charlie arrives from a train which is belching funeral smoke, that his niece has a kind of relationship with him that she does not have with her parents or siblings: the joy with which she darts along the platform to greet him as he strides towards her is nearly erotic in its intensity, especially because of the way the shots are intercut in a way usually reserved in films for the meetings of separated lovers. Charlie in fact functions as something of an erotic object through the film—not only to his niece but also to his landlady, to the ladies he meets later at the Bank, and above all, of course, to his sister Emmy, whose relationship with her husband Joe is such that the film might just as well have been called *Shadow of a Marriage*, as Emmy reveals near the end when she hears her brother is going away, in the poignant words to the effect that when you marry "you sort of forget you're



The murderous uncle and his adoring sister: Joseph Cotten and Patricia Collinge.

you... [you become] your husband's wife." Charley's early diagnosis of family life is in the end shown to have been not only the outcome of idealistically impractical adolescent dissatisfaction but a sign of shrewd psychological instinct.

The strains surface flagrantly during the dinner for the beloved guest on the evening of his arrival. After Charlie has given Joe a watch, and Charley the fatal ring, the dinner is interrupted by the arrival of the next door neighbour Herb/Hume Cronyn, who lives alone with an invalid mother and spends such leisure as he has in discussing with Joe (a great reader of crime magazines) different methods of committing murder. Toadstools, blunt instruments, poison in the coffee, drowning in the bathtub—all figure in their chats throughout the film. Here again there is a certain ambiguity: very likely the first audiences, eager to be entertained, would have laughed at the preoccupation of two mature (in one sense) men with such grisly matters, and taken them as evidence of Mr. Hitchcock's well-known ghoulish sense of humour, but already by this early stage we should be starting to wonder whether the open violence associated with Charlie (and obliquely with the War) isn't restricted to the urban East but only too present in pleasant Santa Rosa, festering beneath the comfortable bourgeois surface—whether indeed violence isn't an integral part of what the film sees as the human condition. Later, Joe doesn't seem in the least appalled by what happens to the supposed Merry Widow murderer when he's cornered back East—he's walked into a plane's propeller and is identifiable only by his clothing, a fact that Herb brings out with cool relish. The only time Joe does register genuine shock is when, in front of the bank-manager, Charlie begins to make jokes about the probity of Banks, embezzlement, and so on (the manager is appropriately called "Mr. Green," but such is Hitchcock's skill that the Mr. Greens in the audience would doubtless have been much amused by him). The following morning

Emmy brings Charlie his breakfast in bed and produces a photo of him taken just before the "accident" which changed him utterly. In my judgment this film has two weak points, both of them, interestingly, connected with the origins of Charlie's violence—one personal, the other (towards the end, and to be discussed later) concerned with the general violence in the film's world. The first is the attribution of Charlie's career as a serial killer to a mere *physical* mischance—the cannoning of a bike into a streetcar, a concussion. One may say *now*; but this isn't 1943, we know better...but was that good enough, even then? Or is it only the doting *Emmy's* explanation, the only kind she (and doubtless most of the audience then) could understand? I remain unsure.

When the detectives arrive, posing as pollsters in a National Public Survey of the typical American family, Emmy gives a wonderful performance (and so in a different sense does Patricia Collinge) as the Typical American Housewife who has substituted social mores for personal being and fulfillment and who can give the impression—not *wholly* false naturally—of really enjoying the role she has learned to play. (The scene about beating the eggs for the cake and so on may seem exaggerated now: but it was spot-on for then. Younger readers will have to trust me here!) But of course human life would be easier if we could distinguish papering over cracks from binding up a wound—an irony somehow beyond irony that becomes apparent only after several viewings.

When Charlie, his secret finally out (certainly to Charley because of the newspaper clipping she's found in the library, and possibly—if he really is the culprit—to the detectives) delivers his verdicts on the world he inhabits, they are damning ones; and no doubt it was easy enough, 55 years ago, to dismiss them as being, like Hitler's, the maniacal if coherent ravings of a psychopath. First, at another "family" dinner to which he has contributed a bottle of what Emmy calls "sparkling burgldy," he comments on

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the difference between small-town women and the middle-aged women in cities who, "by the thousand," spend their time with their deceased husbands' money, drinking it, eating it, playing bridge with it, smelling of it...faded, fat...greedy (I paraphrase and condense to save space). And when Charley objects, voicing the spectators' feelings, "They're alive, they're human beings," her uncle, in one of the most profoundly chilling lines in cinema, asks: "Are they...?"

It is chilling because it crystallises so much of the film's basic misanthropy—not merely misogyny: men don't get off lightly either—and is delivered so much from, as it were, the film's centre that we can't dismiss it as "morbid" or "abnormal": we have too recently seen Mrs. Green and Mrs. Potter, not to mention Herb and Joe and Mr. Green, to be able to say that. Santa Rosa and the values it seemed to embody starts to crumble away before our eyes.

Uncle Charlie's other diatribe is all the more shocking because it's directed not at his murdered rich widows, for whom he presumably felt nothing at all, but at his supposedly beloved and eponymous niece. She flings out of the house after an episode I have so far described piecemeal: a dinner, Charlie's condemnation of rich widows, the arrival of Herb who embarks on another discussion of murder-methods ("your father's method of relaxation," says Emmy, with a humour so unconscious as to be practically catatonic) and Charlie's furious outburst. Uncle Charlie accompanies her down the street, they go into a night-bar, "Til Two" (the emerging GIs reminding us of the War, the flatvoiced downtrodden waitress of the down-side of American smalltown life), and Charlie, after trying to sweet-talk Charley into feeling kinship, twinship, with him, turns on her, contemptuously saying: "You're just an ordinary little girl living in an ordinary little town...You go through your ordinary little day and at night you sleep your ordinary little sleep filled with peaceful stupid dreams...Do you know that the world is a foul sty? Do you know that if you ripped the fronts off houses you'd find swine?—what does it matter what happens in it? Wake up!"

Here again it is easier to dismiss Charlie's philippic as psychopathic than to stand back—for this is a work of art—and consider if there's anything in what he says. Is he, one wonders, doing much more than expressing (if with horrible violence) what his niece herself was complaining about near the start of the picture? No, neither Santa Rosa nor her parents' marriage are quite the "foul sty" he has described, but, as the intendedly loving relation of two people who have brought forth three children, two of whom are alienated, and the wife despairing, the husband inadequate...how much better is it? Doesn't the film's point of view approximate so much more closely than is comfortable to Uncle Charlie's that to see him as a mere interloper bringing disruption into a loving and settled community (as in *The Night of the Hunter* or the earlier version of *Cape Fear*) is to rotate Hitchcock's disorientating moral vision through 180°?

I haven't yet mentioned the detective with whom, sent to Santa Rosa to track down one of the two suspects in the "Merry Widow" murders (the other is, as I've mentioned, eliminated by a propellor back East), Charley falls in love. Jack Graham/MacDonald Carey is such a Grey Hole of a character that one wonders why Hitchcock cast him in the role. In a conventional reading of the film, he would be the straight, "normal" guy who replaces Uncle Charlie in Charlie's perhaps slightly confused, not to say twisted, affections: and that is not a silly reading. Yet when one looks at his performance, and more especially when one studies young Charley's responses to him, that interpretation seems—as so much does in this self-deconstructing film—to run counter to its Director's purposes. Take the scene in the garage, where Jack confesses he loves her (and, incidentally, where it is "established" that the garage door is prone to shut suddenly and get stuck for no apparent reason). Was there ever a more inept declaration? Even Charlie's

laughter at Jack's joke about her young sister is, for once, artificial in a way not entirely attributable to her embarrassment at the approaching proposal (again one suspects an exquisite piece of direction here, but this is shaky territory). And here we come to a fundamental difficulty in and with this film: its refusal to face its own most disturbing insights: a problem that becomes increasingly insoluble as we proceed. For there is one impulse in the film that is Uncle Charlie—that wants to shatter not merely the comfortable world of Santa Rosa but its own assumptions; yet there is another that wants to reassure itself that, contrary to what Charlie says, the world is *not* "a pig-sty," and the people in it, despite its own horrid insights, not swine, just ordinary humans (the film *hopes* there is some distinction).

Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that, as the end approaches, the film seems to decline more and more into the kind of small-town conventionality which, at its start, Charley was condemning so restlessly: it cannot afford to face its own deepest intimations, so Charley has to be paired off with a man like Jack who, though "good" and "right" etc., seems to represent the human possibilities of a guinea-pig—though they must surely be preferable to the possibilities with which Uncle Charlie, despite his much more penetrating insights into the realities of middle-American life, confronts us as a murderous psychopath, and who certainly offers no possibilities whatever of human growth.

Running out of space, I leave aside Uncle Charlie's two attempts to murder his niece—both seem clumsy, the first ludicrously so (what fit young woman was ever killed by falling through a weak step all of five feet above the ground?—and Charlie Oakley is supposed to be a professional murderer!). I leave aside too the gradual moral growth of Charley as she finds out for sure about her uncle and inexorably forces him to leave Santa Rosa. I want to end with a brief discussion of what Jack Graham says about Charlie after, trying to murder his niece in a somewhat more practical manner, he has himself been cut in half by an oncoming train. At the funeral, and ironically counterpointed with the voice of a conventional clergyman intoning platitudes even less applicable than usual, Charlie speaks some scarcely less conventional words of mourning while holding Jack's hand—"He thought that the world was a horrible place.... He said that people like us had no idea what the world was really like." And Jack replies: "Well, it's not quite as bad as that...but sometimes it needs a lot of watching—it seems to go crazy every now and then."

This is the cold, nay chilling, comfort with and in which *Shadow of a Doubt* leaves us. To "go crazy now and then" was in 1943, and is now, less than no explanation of the Uncle Charlies of the world, any more than is Emmy's explanation—a childhood concussion. Perhaps I am influenced here (to speak personally) by my recent reading of Ron Rosenbaum's *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of his Evil* (Random House 1998), in which Rosenbaum analyses in great detail not merely the explanations, but also the *types* of explanations, that historians, psychologists, political theorists, and many other specialist writers, have produced in order to "explain" Hitler. Rosenbaum's final conclusion seems to me to be that there is and *could* be no explanation of such a phenomenon, of such a creature,—that such a mind and the deeds it brought forth are utterly beyond comprehension and therefore beyond explaining. I have to say that is the cheerless feeling with which *Shadow of a Doubt*, where it concerns Uncle Charlie, leaves me, though I have to confess that at moments, when I look in the shaving-mirror...

*N.B. Without any textual warrant, and solely for the sake of simplicity and ease of reference, I have throughout referred to the Uncle as "Charlie" and the Niece as "Charley."

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Kim Novak

Vertigo, Performance and Image

by Richard Lippe

I am writing on Kim Novak's contribution to *Vertigo*, her ninth feature film, because it has been overlooked and undervalued. Novak has long been an actor I greatly admire; she had already proven herself a performer of genuine talent with *The Man With the Golden Arm* and, particularly, *Picnic* but it is with *Vertigo* that the core of Novak's screen image is fully realized. *Vertigo* is also, in my opinion, Alfred Hitchcock's finest achievement.

I have previously written on Kim Novak's career in *CineAction* No. 7. This piece concentrates on Novak's work with Hitchcock and the extraordinary results it produces.

Kim Novak

Kim Novak was chosen by Harry Cohn in 1953 to replace Rita Hayworth, Columbia Pictures' reigning sex symbol. Cohn gave Novak, a twenty-one-year-old aspiring model who had no professional acting experience, a huge publicity build up and launched her career with a low budget *film noir*, Richard Quine's *Pushover* (1954), which co-starred her with Fred MacMurray. Novak was cast as the *femme fatale*. The film was followed quickly with a supporting role in *Phffft* (1954), a Judy Holliday comedy. In *Phffft*, Novak played a dumb blonde patterned on the roles that Marilyn Monroe had specialized in during the early 1950s and, Mark Robson, the film's director, encouraged Novak to imitate Monroe. Novak gained serious critical attention when Cohn cast her as the female lead of Joshua Logan's *Picnic* (1955) and then lent her to Otto Preminger for his highly controversial and dramatic *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1955). During this period, Novak received essentially favourable reviews although the critics, while noting her charisma, were reluctant to acknowledge that Novak truly possessed acting talent. Novak's status as an actor remained uncertain, but her popularity with the public wasn't in doubt. By 1956, Novak was considered Hollywood's top female box-office property.

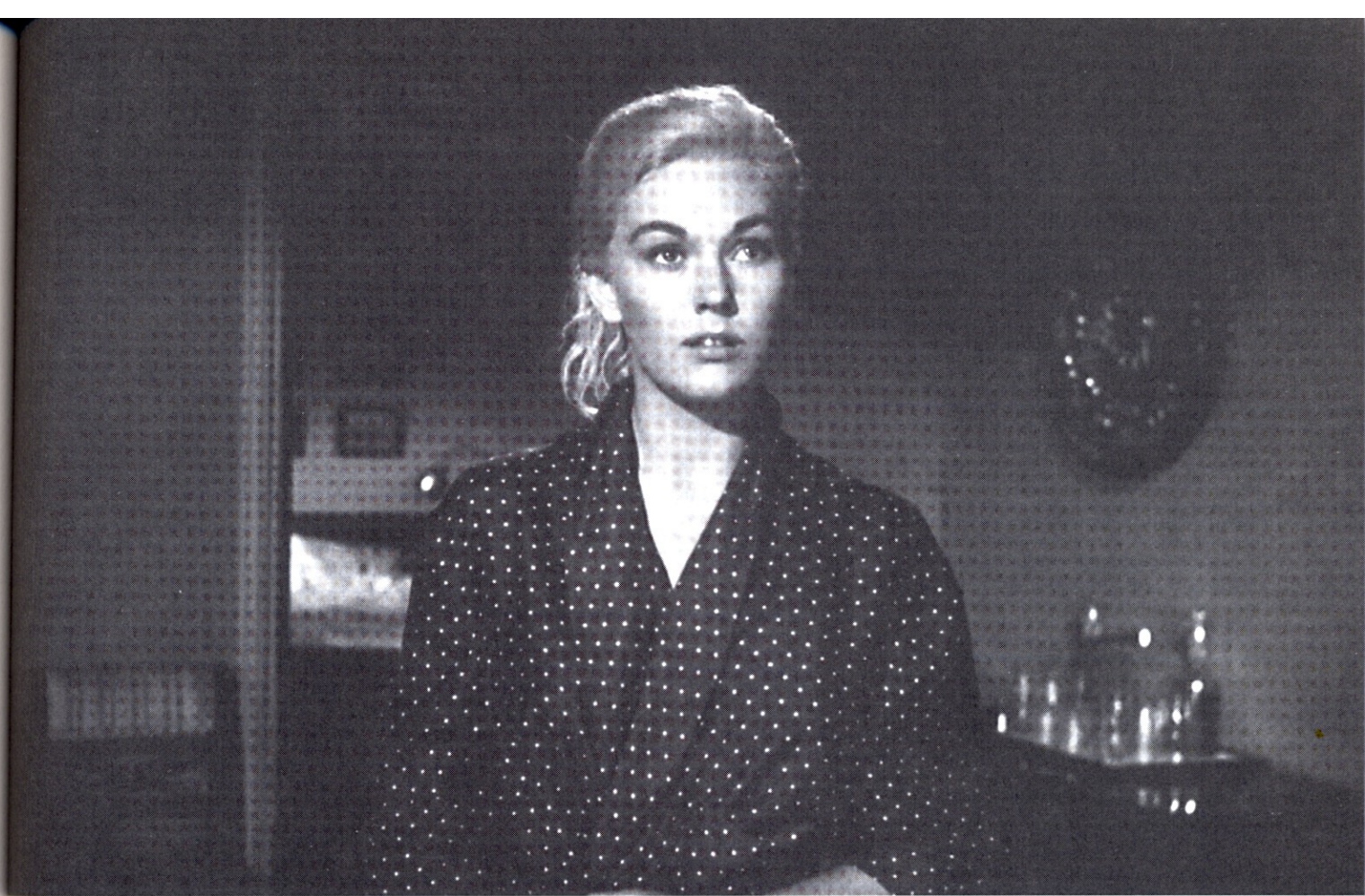
Columbia Pictures, encouraged by her ability to garner a

respectable critical reaction in high profile projects, cast Novak in the title role of *Jeanne Eagels* (1957). With *Jeanne Eagels*, Novak was burdened with a double responsibility—playing a self-destructive, highly talented theatrical actress of the 1920s, she was to prove that she could 'act' and, as her male co-star was Jeff Chandler, a B film actor, carry the film's box-office value. While Novak had received good press for *The Eddy Duchin Story* (1956), a George Sidney film, her work in *Jeanne Eagels* was considered incompetent; furthermore, the film, despite a massive publicity campaign, failed to be the commercial success the studio anticipated. The damage *Jeanne Eagels* did was compounded when later in the year, *Pal Joey*, another George Sidney film, was released. Novak's performance was brutally panned, and the mainstream press began saying that Novak had never been anything other than a manufactured star foisted on the public. It was in this context that Novak, in 1958, appeared in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. While her reviews weren't particularly negative, there was no indication that Novak's contribution to the film deserved recognition. However, *Vertigo* is the film in which Novak confirmed the potential she displayed so clearly in her previous films. *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958) and *Strangers When We Meet* (1960), both directed by Richard Quine, illustrate that Novak benefited from the experience of making *Vertigo*. These films contain subtle, expressive performances but Novak's growth as an actor continued to be ignored—the closest she came to 'serious' acting occurred with Delbert Mann's *Middle of the Night* (1959), an attempt to distance herself from her movie star identification. *Middle of the Night* didn't significantly alter Novak's reputation with the critics nor did her performance as Mildred in Ken Hughes's *Of Human Bondage* (1964).

Recently, Jack Lemmon, in a *Variety* supplement celebrating Columbia Pictures' 75th Anniversary, was asked to comment on Rita Hayworth, Kim Novak and Judy Holliday. Lemmon co-starred with each of these actresses during his tenure at the studio. Of

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Vertigo: Madeleine (Kim Novak) discovers herself in a stranger's apartment.

Novak, he says: "They were [Kim Novak and Tony Curtis] the only people, maybe one or two others, who developed any kind of real acting talent learning from film experience alone. And my hat is off to her."

Hitchcock and Novak

Alfred Hitchcock had intended to cast Vera Miles as *Vertigo*'s female lead. His plan was disrupted when Miles announced that she was pregnant and wouldn't be available. According to Dan Aulier, *Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*, the director quickly selected Kim Novak as a replacement, in part because of her work in *The Eddy Duchin Story*, which was scripted by Samuel Taylor, the co-writer of *Vertigo*'s screenplay. Harry Cohn was delighted to have Novak appear in a Hitchcock film and struck a lend deal with Paramount Pictures, the studio producing the film; in turn, Novak's participation in *Vertigo* enhanced the film's commercial potential. It was Novak-as-star that provided most of the press on the making of the film. The Hitchcock-Novak working relationship was defined primarily by two often repeated Hitchcock anecdotes: 1) Novak came to the project with various demands including what colour clothing she would wear. This led to a major confrontation over the grey suit Madeleine wears; 2) when Novak asked Hitchcock about character motivation, he told her that her motivation was her paycheck. The first story discredits Novak's professionalism, while the second reinforces the director's legendary refusal to indulge his actors. These anecdotes well-served Hitchcock's image but they also suggest that Novak was placed in an impossible position—she was put down whether she tried to assert herself or ask for help. As for Novak's performance in the completed film, Hitchcock was non-committal.

In Francois Truffaut's *Hitchcock*, Hitchcock, discussing *Vertigo*, says "I went to Kim Novak's dressing room and told her about the dresses and hairdos that I had been planning for several months. I



The Redwoods sequence: Scottie (James Stewart) interrogates Madeleine.

also explained that the story was of less importance to me than the over-all visual impact on the screen, once the picture is completed." It is often suggested that Hitchcock's attitude toward actors is summed up by his remark "I never said actors are cattle. I said actors should be treated as cattle." Yet his Hollywood films, beginning with Joan Fontaine in *Rebecca*, contain many remarkable performances. Hitchcock's best films, *Notorious* and *Marnie*, for example, are highly complex, emotionally charged works that probe deep into human desires and needs. The films are profound experiences in part because of the vivid and nuanced performances Hitchcock obtains from his actors. The actors' performances are carefully integrated into the film's visual design; their significance to the film's 'meaning' is produced through the combination of the screenplay, acting, mise-en-scene and editing patterns. One reason why Hitchcock tended to get consistently strong perfor-

mances is that he understood the crucial importance of casting to film acting. (There are, of course, some casting choices that aren't particularly successful including Priscilla Lane in *Saboteur*, Joseph Cotten in *Under Capricorn* and Anne Baxter in *I Confess*. In the first and third films, it is possible that these actors were imposed on Hitchcock by the studio.) Hitchcock's films contain numerous instances in which an aspect of an actor's filmic persona is relevant to the character he or she plays; and, because of his intelligent and creative casting, Anthony Perkins in *Psycho*, for example, an actor could more readily provide Hitchcock with the performance he wanted. Hitchcock's most notorious and unsatisfactory experiences were with Montgomery Clift and Paul Newman, Method actors who wanted to 'create' a character by developing a specific persona for the film. Hitchcock didn't privilege characterization and he wasn't interested in acting vehicles. But he was, as his films attest, highly sensitive to performance and characterization and knew precisely what he needed from an actor. On the other hand, Hitchcock didn't publicly address these concerns—in fact, that he never approved of Novak's performance in interviews doesn't mean that he wasn't satisfied. Perhaps Hitchcock's attitude toward his actors is defined best through his ongoing working relationship with several performers—Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, James Stewart and Grace Kelly. Again, he didn't discuss their abilities as actors; instead, his concerns were their suitability for his projects. It is well-known that Hitchcock had strong personal ties to each of these four actors and that his project choices were on occasion shaped by his friendship. Bergman, the most 'theatrically' inclined of these actors, was given what gets close to an acting vehicle with *Under Capricorn*.

When Harry Cohn and his advisors selected Kim Novak as a potential new star and signed her to a long term contract, they made a major financial investment. As she had no training as an actor, they must have felt that Novak had an asset that justified their commitment. *Pushover* demonstrates what Cohn saw in Novak—a potent screen presence. Screen presence is a key component of stardom but, in turn, stardom isn't primarily dependent on 'acting' in the conventional, theatrically defined concept of performance. Beginning with the introduction of sound in the late 1920s, Hollywood developed an acting tradition that is based on a finely tuned interrelation of screen presence and persona, performance skill and filmic technique. Screen acting itself is often an instance of 'inference'—the ability of an actor to suggest a thought or emotion through a facial expression or body language which then combines with the 'filmic codes' such as framing, camera distance, angle, lighting, editing and so forth. In *Pushover*, in addition to her striking screen presence, Novak greatly benefited from Richard Quine's sympathetic handling and his sensitivity to an aspect of her burgeoning screen persona—a touching vulnerability. Novak also revealed herself to be well-suited to film acting which demands a responsiveness to the camera and the intimacy of the medium.

Vertigo

Hitchcock's filmmaking approach, in addition to his identification with entertainment and the Hollywood cinema, suited his working with 'movie actors'. In *Vertigo*, Hitchcock was again using James Stewart, one of great star/actors. As Midge, he cast Barbara Bel Geddes, who despite an impressive series of film performances in the late 1940s, was considered a theatrical actor. In *Obsessed with Vertigo*, *New Life for Hitchcock's Masterpiece*, the documentary accompanying the 1996 restored *Vertigo* DVD, Bel Geddes recounts with amusement her initial meeting with Hitchcock. She says his first words to her were "Now Barbara, don't act. Don't act." Bel Geddes, to illustrate her point about performing, mentions a shot in which she, at a drawing board, is to react to what Stewart has said; Hitchcock's instructions were "Barbara, look up. Now look down. Now look left." And, with Novak, he had another star/actor

who brought a number of reflexive elements to the film. *Vertigo* makes indirect reference to Novak's filmic identity when Judy tells Scottie that she comes from Kansas which is where *Picnic* takes place. From another perspective, the 'manufacturing' process Gavin Elster and Scottie perform to convert Judy into Madeleine is not dissimilar from the process Marilyn Novak underwent to become Kim Novak, the glamorous movie star. Novak's star image itself can be seen as relevant. Novak's on/off screen image never fully developed into a persona/identity that took on an iconic dimension. For instance, unlike Marilyn Monroe, Novak didn't create a media self that became her being as it was understood by the public. Novak, as Madeleine/Judy, alludes more to the 'construction' involved in star image making than personifying the end product. With Madeleine, she doesn't collapse the division between her presence-as-star and the character, which would enable the viewer to appropriate Madeleine as an identification figure. Identification in *Vertigo* is very complex. On the one hand, the viewer is positioned through Hitchcock's editing to identify with Scottie; but the viewer also identifies with the character because of James Stewart's star image, screen persona and presence. This identification is severely ruptured when it is apparent that Stewart's Scottie is no longer able to sustain his 'heroic' identity; arguably, the film's primary emotional disturbance is centred on Scottie's breakdown. In turn, Hitchcock doesn't allow the viewer identification with Madeleine/Judy until Judy appears. The identification is tentative but it is also essential. Judy knows Scottie's in love with a fantasy figure; she is also aware that she can't compete with an idealized image. It is Judy who becomes the film's most poignant character. This poignancy is intensified through Novak's persona, particularly her vulnerability.

Kim Novak, in the Auiler book, is quoted as saying "Hitchcock knew exactly what he wanted technically and helped me out with that, while allowing me to bring my own interpretation to the role." Her statement reinforces the notion that Hitchcock had confidence in Novak's ability to dramatize the emotional life of the character. In *The 100 Greatest Stars of All Time*, Ty Burr, writing on Ava Gardner, makes a perceptive comment on star acting. According to Burr, Gardner, in referring to her role in *The Barefoot Contessa*, said to Joseph Mankiewicz, the film's director, "Hell, Joe, I'm not an actress, but I think I understand this girl. She's a lot like me."—to which Burr responds with "As if that isn't what acting is all about."

A thoughtful consideration of *Vertigo* should make it apparent that the Madeleine/Judy role is a challenging part. The actor is required to create two distinct characterizations but, unlike many dual roles, the Madeleine and Judy characters aren't conceived as polar opposites, a splitting of the self into 'good' and 'bad'. Madeleine and Judy are, on the one hand, defined through their respective socio-economic positions. Yet, the central concern surrounding Madeleine/Judy is performance, persona and identity—is Madeleine simply Elster's creation or does she exist within Judy herself? If *Vertigo* is to cohere as a narrative, it is necessary that Novak's performance suggests that Madeleine and Judy are fundamentally one and the same person. And, furthermore, Novak needs to make Madeleine, who is associated with ambiguity, madness and death, an accessible character. While the film depicts Scottie's growing obsession with Madeleine, the viewer must be made to feel that she deserves the investment he is making in her. Novak, talking about characterization in the *Vertigo* documentary says: "Madeleine had the complication and the excitement and energy underneath. It was all very, very held back on the outside, but underneath, there were so many things going that, I think, that's part of what fascinated Jimmy Stewart, causing in him the compulsion to want her, to possess her." While the narrative itself and Hitchcock's visuals provide some of the complexity Novak refers to, those elements need to be given substance through her presence and delineation of the character.

Below, I want to discuss a number of definitive instances in the series of tightly connected sequences which present Madeleine and Judy. I think they are crucial to illustrating how Hitchcock and Novak together construct the character(s). In the following discussion, I am trying to point to moments in which Novak's persona and performance skills combine to give her scenes their astonishing intensity and poignancy. It is extremely difficult to talk about acting and performance. To do justice to a performance like Novak's, it would be ideal if frame enlargements were used to illustrate how facial expression and framing shape the image and the characterization. *CineAction* lacks the necessary facilities. I have tried to see the film from the point of Novak's character [Madeleine/Judy] and the problems the role produces for the actor.

Madeleine

Madeleine Elster is introduced in the remarkable Ernie's sequence. The sequence takes place about twenty minutes into the film. Although there is a build up to Madeleine's introduction through Elster's story about her, any viewer expectation is surpassed by Hitchcock's extraordinarily graceful and haunting presentation. The introduction itself, beginning with Scottie's surreptitious look and followed by the elegant tracking forward movement towards the Elsters' table, presents Madeleine as an inaccessible presence—the camera moves from an extreme long shot to a medium close distance but Madeleine keeps her back to the camera. But this introductory shot, closely followed by several cuts, is almost immediately counterpointed by the close up profile shot of Madeleine as she momentarily awaits Elster before the two exit the restaurant. In close up, Madeleine, looking like a beautiful, flawless object, is bathed in a warm light which suggests intimacy. She appears as a self-contained, radiant but non-threatening presence. The sequence's primary function has been to make Madeleine desirable, making plausible Scottie's decision to investigate her daily whereabouts. Madeleine is again under intense scrutiny in the equally remarkable sequence which begins with the visit to the florist and ends with her mysterious disappearance from the McKittrick Hotel. As in the Ernie's footage, Madeleine is somewhat ghost-like although Novak's corporeality tends to counter this impression.

These two sequences plus a third, in which Scottie rescues Madeleine after she jumps into the bay, lead up to Scottie taking Madeleine to his apartment. In *Vertigo*, Auiler claims, based on production records, the apartment sequence was the film's most difficult shoot. While the sequence makes demands on both actors, it is Novak who has the greater burden as she must humanize Madeleine and, at the same time, suggest that the character cannot be fully appropriated. Again, as in the Ernie's sequence, Hitchcock's work is very precise, fluid and delicate. He pays close attention to both the actor positioning and movements within the frame and the cutting on dialogue exchanges. The sequence begins with Madeleine awakening to discover that she is in a male stranger's bed and nude. A dialogue exchange begins when Madeleine emerges from the bedroom, wearing Scottie's red silk dressing gown. As Novak's Madeleine opens the bedroom door, which mysteriously swings back fully to reveal her standing in the doorway, she immediately dominates the scene. In part she does through her striking, sensual presence as she walks towards Scottie and the camera; but she also takes control over the encounter by questioning Scottie as to what is going on. Madeleine, despite the awkwardness of the situation, maintains her poise—she is direct but civil in her manner. In turn, Scottie begins to question Madeleine, asking her what she remembers. Hitchcock uses one-shots as the characters interrogate each other; but, as Madeleine begins to relax and become more familiar, he employs a series of two shots. These shots culminate in the image of Scottie placing his hand on Madeleine's as he is about to pick up her coffee cup. At this point, their intimacy is interrupted by the bedroom telephone ringing.

The entire sequence is choreographed on the actors' movements and looks—particularly eye contact. In these scenes, Novak's characteristic on-screen reticence is well used—she uses her eyes to communicate Madeleine's reactions to Scottie and the situation. In addition, Madeleine's tactful handling of the potentially compromising aspects of their situation functions to intensify the erotic charge Novak brings to the encounter. In this sequence, Scottie and Madeleine are at their most relaxed. The sequence fully succeeds in involving the viewer in the developing relationship between the two and justifies Scottie's fascination with Madeleine.

In the above-mentioned sequence, Scottie and Madeleine develop a casual intimacy which is sustained when Scottie, the following day, discovers Madeleine at his front door, with a note of apology for the inconvenience she has caused him. But this mood is disrupted in the Redwoods sequence. Again, Hitchcock is concerned with the importance of location on characterization and narrative development. The Redwoods, with their evocative connections to time and human mortality, cause Madeleine to retreat into herself. The sequence reintroduces ambiguity into her identity and reinforces Madeleine's helplessness. It is in the shot in which Madeleine, after wandering away from Scottie, is found standing backed against a tree that Novak must bring conviction to Madeleine's torment. Instead of cutting back and forth, Hitchcock shoots Scottie's questioning of Madeleine in a long take, using a medium close two-shot. Novak is responsible for making Scottie and the viewer realize the extent to which Madeleine is threatened by psychic demands she cannot fully account for. Novak conveys Madeleine's barely suppressed panic through an intense concentration and an urgent delivery of her lines; she reaffirms Madeleine's vulnerability through both her terse narration and an avoidance of eye contact with Scottie. The shot is significant in itself; but, it also serves as a connecting link to the following sequence in which Madeleine's dreams of death and her present reality, eroticism and romanticism, converge. It is the sequence which ends with the extraordinary shot of Scottie and Madeleine, standing at the edge of a turbulent Pacific Ocean, clinging together and then kissing after Scottie vows to protect Madeleine from harm.

Scottie's and Madeleine's final encounter takes place at San Juan Bautista. Similar to a moment in the Redwoods sequence, Madeleine seems to become possessed suddenly by Carlotta as she recalls, sitting on an abandoned carriage, childhood memories of the horses kept in the stable on the church grounds. Scottie, in an attempt to make Madeleine relate to him and the present, embraces her, telling her that he loves her. Madeleine responds by saying that she loves him too. Nevertheless, Scottie doesn't fully have Madeleine's attention—she disengages saying that there is something she must do. Madeleine's baffling behaviour becomes even more pronounced. When Scottie tries to stop her from running towards the church, she says "No. It's too late." At this point in the narrative, the viewer, like Scottie, doesn't know that it is Judy speaking. Novak, with a very strong command over the layers of performance that are involved, suggests through a blunt, assertive delivery that she is no longer in character as Madeleine; at the same time, she doesn't indicate in a discernible manner that Madeleine has assumed another identity. In these moments, Madeleine and Judy co-exist. In hindsight, it is clear that it is Novak's nuanced shifting from persona to persona that makes these highly ambiguous, emotionally intense scenes convincing.

Madeleine is, as Novak suggested in discussing her interpretation of the character, a deceptively 'passive' person. In addition, Madeleine, as presented, is seen in a series of fragmented images—and these images contain the identities of both Madeleine and Carlotta.

As an actor, Novak must, if the film is going to be dramatically and emotionally satisfying, make Madeleine 'real' so that her life and death matter.

Judy

Vertigo's rigorous formal strategies are again evident in Judy's introduction, which is a compressed version of Madeleine's introduction. As with Madeleine, Scottie initially sees Judy in public, with the one-shot profile image from the Ernie's sequence repeated. Scottie is then seen following Judy, watching her enter a hotel and reappear as she looks out of a window, as Madeleine did at the McKittrick Hotel. Finally, Scottie's and Judy's first conversation takes place in private—in this case, it is Judy's (bed)room in the Empire Hotel. By retracing the progression of the Scottie-Madeleine relationship, the film foregrounds its 'doubling' motif which is also evident through an emphasis on reflections (e.g., Madeleine seen in front of the Carlotta painting) and mirrors—in Judy's room, Scottie and Judy conduct most of their conversation standing in front of the mirror attached to the dresser. In conceiving Judy's character, Hitchcock utilizes Novak's self-consciousness as an on-screen presence. Novak isn't a 'naturalistic' performer—as several critics have pointed out, she is an actor ideally suited, with her self-conscious behaviour and ability to suggest a subjective reaction, to the modernist cinema. Judy, unlike Madeleine, doesn't come across as being a confident person. Judy's working class identity is conveyed through her clothing and make-up; and Hitchcock has Novak speak in a slightly higher voice register, making Judy sound less cultured and seductive. These technical elements aid Novak in differentiating Judy

from Madeleine—particularly in the scene in which Scottie and Judy first meet. This encounter is the single instance in the film in which Novak, while in character, appears to be giving a 'performance'; Judy initially appears to be defiant and tough, but the image is dropped quickly.

The hotel room sequence contains the crucial revelation, shown through a flashback, that Judy was Madeleine. The sequence also has other important functions: 1) the viewer is even further distanced from Scottie and, in turn, an identification with Judy is established; 2) and the letter writing scene, in which Judy declares her love and decides to make Scottie love her as she is, sets up the final movement of the film. In the writing of the letter, Novak is required to sustain a long take close-up shot as Judy's voice-over narration is heard on the soundtrack. The shot, in which the camera partially circles Judy as she thinks through her thoughts and feelings, is extremely demanding; Novak sustains the camera's scrutiny during the long take. Hitchcock uses the long take close-up to make Judy into an accessible character; in this shot, she is unguarded in what she reveals, producing an intimacy between herself and the viewer. As the shot concludes, she projects Judy's ambivalent feelings—in equal measure surrendering to her desire to gain Scottie's love and resolving to resist her fears that he will uncover the truth.

Madeleine and Judy seem to be split respectively into an 'internal' and 'external' persona. Yet the division isn't so neat; in

Judy (Kim Novak) makes a final attempt to assert her identity.



fact, Novak, with Judy, needs to communicate the character's subjective responses to what is happening between Scottie and herself. This becomes particularly important when Judy begins to realize that Scottie's intention is to reconstruct her into Madeleine's image. On the one hand, she can't tell him that Madeleine, as he perceived her, never existed; on the other, by agreeing to his demands, she is denying her own identity and existence. Her dilemma, and the anguish it produces, is most forcefully evident in the scene in which Scottie asks Judy to dye her hair blonde. Judy initially rejects the suggestion; but, accepting the realization that she can only have Scottie on his terms, she agrees, saying "I don't care about myself anymore." (In this scene, as throughout the film, Stewart and Novak beautifully work together, each offering the other support.) The scene is followed by the brief montage in which Judy's make-up and hair colour are changed to match Madeleine's. In the meantime, Scottie, at Judy's hotel room, awaits her return, anticipating the transformation. When she arrives, wearing a copy of Madeleine's grey suit, her now blonde hair is worn down—the hairdo representing Judy's last attempt to retain her own identity. Judy defends her decision about the hairdo, saying Madeleine's hair style didn't suit her. When Scottie persists, Judy turns towards him and stares at him for a moment before leaving the room. Her silent, final protest is an eloquent gesture suggesting her anger and, then, resignation; with the reaction, Novak acknowledges Judy's figurative death. This moment of despair is spectacularly erased when Judy, in a hallucinatory-like image, reappears transformed into Madeleine, walking towards the camera as Madeleine did earlier in Scottie's apartment. But now she is offering herself to him and, by extension, the viewer. Judy's surrender to Scottie is completed with the shot in which they kiss. Scottie reclaims Madeleine and the kiss, as the shot concludes, is the film's most extravagantly romantic image—in a film that contains many haunting, magical images. In the *Vertigo* documentary Novak says the transformation scene wasn't difficult because she completely understood what Judy was going through—her desire to please Scottie and have him want her; and, her performance fully illustrates her understanding of the character's feelings and what is at stake for her.

Arguably, the viewer, like Scottie, prefers Madeleine to Judy who, in contrast, is much too ordinary. *Vertigo* is visually, in production design, colour and images, an extremely beautiful film and Novak, as Madeleine, from her first appearance, is the focus of its beauty. By the time Scottie takes Madeleine/Judy to the church's bell tower to confront the truth, any clear division between Madeleine and Judy seems to have disappeared. Judy has become Madeleine in appearance and both she and Scottie function as if Madeleine has returned. Nevertheless, at the tower, Madeleine/Judy, realizing what Scottie is doing, begins to panic; and, in the climbing-the-staircase scene, Judy's identity is present in that she confesses to the deception. Stewart and Novak enact the violent confrontation, in which Hitchcock uses a demanding long take, with a powerful intensity. Novak expresses both the immediate terror her character is experiencing and the sense that everything is ending. Scottie's rage makes him increasingly brutal, leading to his dragging Madeleine/Judy up the stairs. In the film's final scenes, the question as to whether it is Madeleine or Judy who is 'real' is primarily Scottie's concern. Here, as in the stable and churchground scenes, Madeleine and Judy are equally present. But now the viewer, having had access to Judy's identity, understands that Madeleine/Judy is, like Scottie, a victim.

In its conclusion, *Vertigo*'s powerful impact derives from both Scottie's descent into hysteria and despair and Madeleine/Judy's death. Hitchcock, by rejecting the novel's climactic revelation that Madeleine and Judy are the same person, strongly undercuts the *femme fatale* aspects of the character. And, in casting Novak in the role, he has an actress who, because of her vulnerability,

underscores his intentions. Before falling from the tower, Madeleine/Judy attempts to convince Scottie of her sincerity and commitment. In these moments, Novak, as she has throughout the film, makes the character a very human presence.

Kim Novak, *Vertigo* and after

Vertigo provided Kim Novak with an acting challenge and she responded by giving Hitchcock a complex, subtle performance. Novak fully realizes the Madeleine/Judy which Hitchcock and his scriptwriters constructed and the director shaped through his technique and stylistics. *Vertigo* makes a significant advance in Novak's development as an actor. In *Vertigo* and thereafter, she displays a greater control over her performances. The experience of working with Hitchcock (and Stewart) seems to have given Novak more self-confidence as a performer. This is shown in various ways, including her greater ease in confronting directly the camera and its gaze. As I said, *Vertigo* represents, I think, a collaborative effort between Hitchcock and Novak which was based at some level on a mutual trust.

Of Novak's later films, it is fruitful to compare *Vertigo* to Robert Aldrich's *The Legend of Lylah Clare* (1968). In Aldrich's film, Novak again plays a two-character role—Elsa, a timid, untrained aspiring actor and Lylah, a tough, glamorous movie star who died many years ago under mysterious circumstances. There are, in fact, numerous parallels between the films, including a male protagonist, a film director played by Peter Finch, who attempts to reconstruct Lylah (and revive his career) by imposing her identity on Elsa, Lylah's look-a-like. Like *Vertigo*, *The Legend of Lylah Clare* is a highly ambitious project but Aldrich never manages to shape the material into a meaningful statement. Novak ably creates the two characters but Aldrich doesn't allow her to unify the characters; perhaps because he is more concerned with producing a critique of the Finch character and the studio system. Hence, Novak's performance, like the film itself, isn't fully realized. In *What Ever Happened to Robert Aldrich?*, the director, in an interview, suggests he cast Novak because MGM, the studio involved in the film's production, wanted to use her as she owed them a picture. When the film failed commercially and critically, Aldrich questioned Novak's casting, claiming her star image and presence prevented her from being convincing as the character. On the other hand, Aldrich undermined Novak's performance when, in post production, he dubbed another actress's voice for the more demanding verbal confrontations Lylah has with the Finch character. The gesture seems to confirm his uncertainty about what he was attempting to accomplish with Novak and the character. Aldrich has Novak give a strictly 'external' characterization. There is no apparent interest on his part to utilize Novak's ability to bring shading to her interpretation. As *The Mirror Crack'd* (1980), in which she again plays an actress, illustrates, Novak can, when demanded, give an 'unsubtle' performance; but with *The Legend of Lylah Clare*, the characterization seems to call for a greater emotional and psychological complexity than Aldrich elicits from Novak.

When the newly restored *Vertigo* was rereleased in 1996, Kim Novak helped publicize the occasion by doing interviews and touring with the film in America and Europe. James Stewart was still alive but he was too frail to participate in the film's promotion—the other person often cited as a major contributor to the film's success, Bernard Herrmann, died in 1975. While Novak was duly recognized as a participant in the film, her performance, as in the past, was taken for granted and not given its due. *Vertigo* is Alfred Hitchcock's film and in 1999, his centenary, he deserves praise for providing the cinema with one of its great works. But it is also time that Kim Novak is given a fuller recognition for her contribution. Her performance in *Vertigo* belongs high on the list of extraordinary performances in Hitchcock's films. It is impossible to conceive of *Vertigo* without Kim Novak and her remarkable performance.

Vertigo

Imagined and Imaged

Francois Truffaut, in *Hitchcock*, speculates that, as *Vertigo* in its original release was "neither a hit nor a failure", Hitchcock must, given his standards, consider the film a "flop". Hitchcock replies "I suppose so. One of our whimsies when a picture isn't doing too well is to blame it on the faulty exploitation. So let's live up to the tradition and say they just didn't handle the sales properly!" (p.188) As often happens in Hitchcock interviews, his response is somewhat playful and evasive. Hitchcock's reputation suggests that he had control over most aspects of his films and it is highly likely that he was directly involved in shaping *Vertigo's* publicity campaign. Every Hitchcock film was promoted as an event, with a build up of interest in and expectation about the film through publicity techniques. Like the films themselves, Hitchcock's publicity strategies were often sophisticated and imaginative. He played on the viewer's anticipation, creating intrigue as to what the film was about. Hitchcock well understood the seductive power of the 'tease'.

Vertigo was in certain respects a difficult film to market. On the one hand, in addition to Hitchcock's name and reputation, the film featured two major stars, James Stewart and Kim Novak, which gave it a strong commercial potential. On the other, the film's title posed a problem. In *Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*, Dan Aulier claims there was a year-long debate over the film's title. Paramount Pictures objected to "Vertigo" thinking it was a handicap to the selling of the film. The studio preferred the bland and more conventional "Face in the Shadows" but Hitchcock maintained that "Vertigo" was a better choice (p. 69, 113). The film was shot under the provocative working title "From Among the Dead" which is a literal translation of the Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac novel "D'Entre les Morts". Aulier doesn't say why the title wasn't retained—it may have been considered too sensationalistic for a prestigious film. In addition, Hitchcock hired Saul Bass to design both the film's title sequence and the 27" x 41" one sheet poster. The poster's image was used as the primary basis of the advertising of the film's release, appearing in magazines, newspapers and so forth. Bass's poster graphics featured an expressionistic-like image, a spiral shape with the figures of a man and woman falling into the centre of the concentric lines. Although the image depicts a 'vertigo' effect, the design doesn't give any clear indication as to the film's content. *Vertigo*, as a narrative, is difficult to categorize generically and, as Hitchcock's films were known for their suspense and shock value, there wasn't a lot that could be revealed about the film in the publicity campaign. Hence, *Vertigo* was sold primarily on the strength of Hitchcock's name, the appeal of its stars, an unusual title and an ambiguous graphic image.

An additional element of any film promotion campaign is the 8" x 10" photograph, the still. This material can be broken down roughly into 1) the publicity still, which is usually a stylized image featuring the film's stars in "character"—that is, wearing make up and clothing seen in the film and 2) the scene still, which is intended to more or less depict an actual narrative event. As Joel W. Finler, in *Hollywood Movie Stills: the Golden Age*, says, attention-getting trick shots, such as double exposures and the photomontage, were frequently produced for publicity purposes. He also mentions that Hitchcock's films were promoted with particularly imaginative publicity stills, illustrating his point with stills from such films as *Notorious*, *Strangers on a Train* and *The Wrong Man*. As these films were made over a period of years and at different studios, it suggests Hitchcock was involved consistently in the publicity campaign process.

In Harrison Engle's documentary, *Obsessed with Vertigo*, Martin Scorsese and Kim Novak both say that they felt the film was for Hitchcock a very personal project. *Vertigo*, dealing with obsession and

the suggestion of necrophilia, is far removed from the conventional Hollywood film. *Vertigo*, as J. Hoberman points out (*Village Voice*, October 15, 1996, p. 60), belongs to the Surrealist tradition in both its imagery and thematics. The film evokes the tradition not to undercut through irony its romantically charged subject matter but, rather, to heighten the tragic consequences of the characters' actions. And, *Vertigo* is in equal measure a work which reflects a strong influence of Expressionism. It is all the more remarkable then that *Vertigo*, which so brilliantly integrates Surrealism and Expressionism, is also so clearly a product of the classical Hollywood cinema. I am thinking, for instance, of the way the film uses its stars to sell the film and, on the other hand, utilizes radically their screen personas to serve the text. Hitchcock used top stars and relied on their familiarity and distinctive traits to encourage viewer identification; but, at the same time, he was able to make a bold aesthetic and thematic statement through his subversive use of the stylistic, narrative and socio-economic conventions shaping mainstream cinema. *Psycho* is a variation of this tactic as is *Marnie*—films which are, like *Vertigo*, audacious, complex and emotionally devastating.

In the following section, I am discussing briefly five *Vertigo* stills. The publicity stills were probably shot by Bud Fraker, who was under contract to Paramount Pictures when *Vertigo* was filmed. While the images are to an extent in keeping with the conventions of the publicity still such as using a predominantly neutral background, the images function to reflect expressly the film's Surrealist and Expressionist connotations. The three publicity still images are boldly conceived and present a disturbing portrait of Stewart's identity in the film. Scene stills aren't frame enlargements. These images were often staged specifically for the photographer after the shooting of a scene was completed. Scene stills weren't necessarily shot by the same person who did the publicity stills. The studios employed a number of photographers and usually the most prestigious assignments, such as a publicity campaign, were handled by the top photographer on the lot. I have chosen two scene stills which feature images that have become emblematic of the film. These images acknowledge *Vertigo's* deeply (anti-) romantic nature which Hitchcock makes accessible in great part through his sensitive and perceptive use of James Stewart and Kim Novak.

While the marketing of a film can be a key factor in its commercial success, Hitchcock's response to Truffaut suggests he was aware that *Vertigo's* original financial return wasn't solely an issue of how the film was sold. Considering Saul Bass's graphics and the publicity stills, it is arguable that the promotional material was too abstract. On the other hand, *Vertigo* is a demanding and disturbing film. The film is closer in form and content to what became known in the 1960s as the European art film. It isn't surprising that *Vertigo* was embraced on its original release by the New Wave critics, who appreciated its artistry and better understood Hitchcock's accomplishment. *Vertigo's* success story may be that Hitchcock was able to make the film in Hollywood and that the environment allowed him, with the help of numerous creative collaborators, to realize his vision so beautifully.

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Publicity Still

The still uses trick photography, the two images of Kim Novak, to attract attention. The trick photography is further emphasized in that there is nothing else in the photograph to detract from the medium-close images of the two Novaks and James Stewart. There is no shadowing to create a mood or the spotlighting of a particular element in the image. The background is completely neutral and the three figures are given equal prominence. The positioning of the figures in the frame stresses the horizontal, producing a feel of order and evenness. Stewart is placed in the centre of the image and he appears to be completely self-absorbed. The two Novak figures are strikingly contrasted in make up, hair colouring and clothing and seem to be competing for his attention. Novak's Madeleine and Stewart's Scottie are in close contact, the image of a romantic couple. In contrast, Novak's Judy functions as a disruption, both in the way the image is "fitted" into the composition and through the overtly sexual aspects of her presence. Whereas Stewart is in a frontal pose, the Novak figures are each in profile and positioned to suggest that the profiles mirror each other. The image is notable for its directness; and yet, it is extremely ambiguous—there is nothing given that signals a specific interpretation of the image. The still is particularly subtle in providing information as to what *Vertigo*, a Hitchcock film, will offer.



Publicity Still

This still provides a context, a stone arch. Stewart's and Novak's positioning and facial expressions suggest height and danger—a reference to the "vertigo" of the title. The image, as with the previous still, is ambiguous; it isn't clear whether Stewart is attempting to restrain Novak's Madeleine or menace her. Stewart is in a dominant position, looking somewhat enigmatic. The two actors are both dressed in dark clothing which adds to the dramatic impact of the image; on the other hand, their elegant attire is at odds with the primitive-looking surroundings. Although Stewart's face isn't as lit as Novak's, the lighting overall is bright and even and isn't mood-enhancing. The vertical shape of the image is strengthened by having the actors, in full figure, positioned in the centre of the frame. Stewart and Novak, in turn, look downward, increasing the ambiguity of what is taking place.

The still features an image that approximates an occurrence in the film—it evokes the climactic confrontation between Scottie and Madeleine. But, because of the artifice involved in the set and staging of the action, it tends to suggest dream-like imagery. In contrast to the previous still, this still indicates that Novak is in physical danger in *Vertigo*.



Publicity Still

As with the Madeleine-Scottie-Judy still, the background of the image is neutral and brightly lit. There is a prop, the arm of the couch on which Novak appears to be seated, but it doesn't provide a context for the action taking place. As there is a minimal amount of dramatic lighting, the shadowing of the left side of Stewart's and Novak's faces, the tension in the image resides, as it does in the two previous stills, in the dramatic relationship between the actors. Stewart's dark suit underscores his sinister gesture and Novak, as Judy, is dressed and made up to emphasize her sexual presence. Stewart is again the dominating figure. Novak's sidelong glance and hand gesture suggest an attempt to defend herself.

Of these three stills, this image is the most misleading in regard to the film's actual content; at best, it is a reference to Judy's claim that Elster had broken his wife's neck before throwing her from the tower. The still belongs to a series of images which culminate in Scottie strangling Madeleine/Judy.

Scene Still

This still features a close up of Stewart and Novak in the stable on the church grounds. Yet the context isn't clear; rather, the background consists of light and shadow which subtly produces a feel of the elusive and the partially hidden. Both Stewart and Novak appear to be totally self-absorbed. Stewart's profile position and downcast eyes make it look almost as if he is unaware of Novak's presence. Novak, in full face, with her intense gaze also seems disconnected. Stewart, as in the other stills discussed, dominates Novak, with a gesture that suggests protection and/or containment. Whereas the Golden Gate Bridge still conveyed the expansive and the 'masculine', this image is intimate and more 'feminine'. This occurs partly because the image privileges Novak—her beauty, the flawless face with its clarity and strength. It emphasizes her subjectivity. As with the other scene still, this image is also highly romantic. Stewart's and Novak's embrace has the appearance of an almost delicate gesture, pitched between passion and a certain reserve. The latter is reinforced by their formal attire and grooming. On the other hand, the image contains an element of an unacknowledged tension and desperation.

The image has a double function—it is equally meaningful to the film's concerns and to the identity of James Stewart and Kim Novak as movie stars. In both contexts, the image is a combination of the fantastic, the 'real' and the highly personal. The still, I think, contains the most touching image used presently to define the film.



Scene Still

It isn't necessary to see *Vertigo* to appreciate this powerful image. The still has a very dynamic composition with Stewart and Novak at its centre. The actors, in full figure, are positioned between a majestic backdrop—natural elements and the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge—and a foreground filled by a Rolls Royce and the corner of a brick building. The stability conveyed by their surroundings is juxtaposed to Stewart's in-action gesture of carrying Novak's limp body towards the car. Stewart's facial expression reflects both desperation and determination. Stewart's action makes him a heroic-looking figure. The image carries classical romantic connotations—the couple, commitment and an undying love.

This still has become perhaps *Vertigo*'s most representative image. It was used, for instance, in the poster designed for the 1983 rerelease campaign and, more recently, in *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies*, Scorsese uses the still as the book's concluding image. The still's appeal is undeniable—the image eloquently encapsulates not only a specific and crucial narrative segment, it also summarizes the film itself.



Vertigo

Authorship as Transformation

by Tony Williams

"I would make a plea, then, for criticism of *Wuthering Heights* to turn its attention to the human core of the novel, to recognize its truly human centrality. How can we fail to see that the novel is based on an interest in, concern for, and knowledge of real life? We cannot do it justice, establish what the experience of reading it, really is, by making analyses of its lock and window imagery, or by explaining it as being concerned with children of calm and children of storm, or by putting forward such bright ideas as that *Wuthering Heights* might be viewed at long range as 'a variant of the demon-lover-motif' (*The Gates of Horn*, H.H. Levin) or that 'Nelly Dean is Evil' — these are the products of an age which conceives literary criticism as either a game or an industry, not as a humane study. To learn anything of this novel's true nature we must put it into the category of novels it belongs to — I have specified *Women in Love* and *Jules et Jim* and might add *Anna Karenina* and *Great Expectations*—and recognize its relation to the social and literary history of its own time."

(Q.D. Leavis, *Lectures in America*, 1969, quoted by Garry Watson, 121)

Since the original appearance of *Hitchcock's Films* by Robin Wood, the status of *Vertigo* as a major cinematic achievement whose last third is "among the most disturbing and painful experiences the cinema has to offer" (387) has been more than confirmed by the volume of critical studies devoted to the film. It is not my purpose to add to this continually flowing stream nor to critique many of the insightful works devoted to this film. However, I wish to suggest that future studies of this film do not neglect the significance of the original source novel upon which it is based. Although the novel may contradict any claims made for the *pure* originality of Hitchcock's authorship, it is an important object in revealing the transformative nature of the director's talent. It is one using the novel's themes of voyeurism, male insecurity, and patriarchal oppression but developing them in an artistically significant manner.

Vertigo: Novel into Film

According to Wood, "Hitchcock took very little from *D'Entre les Morts* apart from the basic plot line, and then proceeded to minimize the importance even of that." Writing at a time when cinema defined itself as a unique art in the Anglo-Saxon world, Wood dismissed the original novel as "a squalid exercise in sub-Graham Greenery." (108). This is a judgement which needs challenging on several levels. First, an examination of the original novel reveals the presence of *many* motifs Hitchcock transferred and then transformed in his own creative manner. It does not deserve dismissal in such cavalier terms and needs further study. Significantly, Wood later reversed his earlier dismissal of Daphne du Maurier's novel

Rebecca in relation to the Hitchcock version. Secondly, although this is not the place to argue for Graham Greene's significance as a novelist exposing the ideologically sterile nature of British life (as well as his claim to be regarded as one of the literary influences behind forties British *film noir*), not all works outside the evaluative realm of E.R. Leavis's great tradition are completely devoid of interest as Wood seemed to believe when he wrote the original *Hitchcock's Films* in the early 60s. Significant works do not appear in a vacuum and it is important to examine the nature of the original source material and how it may lead to artistic transformation. The same is true of *D'Entre les Morts*.

Until Tim Lucas's brief examination in *Video Watchdog* the novel received very little critical attention. The book definitely displays themes Wood exclusively ascribes to Hitchcock such as male insecurity, violence against women and their victimization within a deadly patriarchal romantic illusion. Male fears concerning female sexuality also appear. Written by the authors of *Les Diaboliques*, *D'Entre les Morts* ("From Among the Dead") was published in America as a Dell paperback in April 1958 prior to the release of Hitchcock's film. Translated by Geoffrey Sainsbury, the publishers chose the title, *Vertigo*, rather than *The Living and the Dead* which appears in small print below. Contrary to popular legend, Thomas Narcejac and Pierre Boileau never wrote the book especially for Hitchcock. However, the 1955 release of Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* brought *D'Entre les Morts* to the attention of both Paramount and Hitchcock (Auiler, 28-30). A synopsis of the novel is necessary at this point.

During France's preparations for mobilization against Germany in 1940, shipbuilder Paul Gévigne asks his former college friend, Roger Flavières, "to keep an eye" (5) on his wife. Former policeman Roger is an insecure male. He has always suffered from vertigo, feels remorse about the death of a colleague who slipped and fell from a roof in his place while chasing a criminal, and harbors guilt feelings about his inability to enter military service during a crucial period in French history. Roger is now a lawyer. He has chosen this profession "to discover the secrets that prevent people living" (22), an apt parallel to Hitchcock's cinematic interrogation of people dominated by the dead hand of the past.

Like his later counterpart, Gavin Elster, Gévigne has married into money. His wife, Madeleine, is supposedly possessed by the spirit of her great grandmother, Pauline Lagerlac, who committed suicide a few months after she gave birth to a son (11). Although this reference remains unexplored it clearly associates Pauline's death with post-natal trauma and also anticipates the heroine's fate as a victim of patriarchy. Furthermore the reference also supplies a key motivation for both Roger and Scottie since it connects



Judy reluctantly agrees to her transformation into Madeleine.

the male's romantic pursuit of the female with a desire to regain pre-Oedipal union with the lost mother, a desire which turns to violence if frustrated. The novel also anticipates Hitchcock's expressionist color techniques in films such as *Rope* and *Marnie* as well as Scottie's dark mystical quest for Madeleine by referring to a 1920s German expressionist film the two college friends once saw—*Jacob Boehme*. (8) Thus, the original source material for Hitchcock's film already contained references to the type of visual techniques he would both use and develop during the filmmaking process. As many critics have noted, Hitchcock was influenced by the silent film techniques of German expressionism and developed this formative influence in later films with the aid of new technologies such as sound and color.

Themes of voyeurism clearly occur in the novel. Roger begins to spy on Madeleine. He first sees her in a theater but cannot use "the mother-of-pearl opera glasses to raise to his eyes to study Madeleine's face" (19). As the play begins, Roger remembers his college days with Paul when both "lacked the audacity to cope with girls" (20) who used to tease them both. He remembers his

virile college friend Marco who had no trouble at all. Even his former police colleagues "used to make fun of him". He feels jealous of Paul for marrying. The novel thus already presents Roger as a vulnerable and insecure male. He erotically imagines himself in his friend's place watching Madeleine undressing and framing her in a classical portrait: "in that gilded half-light she stood out like a portrait." (21) He performs functions common to both Scottie and the voyeuristic camera eye in *Vertigo*.

D'Entre les Morts also suggests that despite comfortable external masks, the whole of human existence exhibits deep insecurity, especially when it involves conscious or unconscious reactions to a negative world of patriarchal power. "Even Gévigne, with his money, his factories, his influential friends, wasn't really living. They were liars, all of them, these people who, like Marco, pretended they could rise rough-shod over every obstacle. Who knew whether Marco wasn't at that moment in desperate need of a friend to lean on? A man on the stage kissed a girl..It looked so easy, but that was a lie too." (22)

Many features exist in the novel which Hitchcock recognized as akin to his own authorial vision as the following quotation shows: "The truth was that they were all like him, Flavières, trembling on the edge of a slope at the bottom of which was the abyss. They laughed, they made love, but they were afraid. What would become of them if there weren't whole professions whose job it was to prop them up—the priest's, the doctor's, the lawyers?" (22)

Roger saves Madeleine from drowning in the Seine and falls in love with her. But theirs is a chaste relationship suggesting Roger's pathological fear of femininity. He compares Madeleine to Eurydice whom Orpheus failed to rescue from the underworld. Roger also cites the visit of Aeneas to the underworld (50-51) thus revealing himself as dominated by Freud's Death Instinct, a psychopathological pattern strongly evident in a decade which saw both the appearance of *Vertigo* and

Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (see also Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age*). Roger also blames Madeleine for his self-induced male psychopathology in terms reminiscent of Scottie's later condemnation of Judy. "She absorbed literally all his strength. He was a blood-donor. No, that wasn't the word. A soul donor" (52).

Eventually, Madeleine rushes up a church tower and supposedly plunges to her death. Roger first denies his culpability to Paul then finally admits it. When he listens later to news about the German breakthrough, an interesting comparison between the historical situation and Roger's personal dilemma appears. "In any case, this war they talked so much about was only a tiny episode in the death-struggle that was his" (80). His romantic yearning for Madeleine appears as a sublimation for masochistic insecurities concerning his physical inability to fight for his country. "Outwardly he looked himself: inwardly he was ravaged, corroded, burnt-out and blackened, his four walls left standing round a heap of wreckage. With that picture he *nourished his misery*, making it more bearable. He was beginning to respect his ordeal" (84, italics

mine). Finally, with "death in his soul", he travels south for the duration of the war.

When Roger returns to Paris as an alcoholic in 1944, he discovers that Paul died in a car accident while under police investigation for the death of his wife. Viewing a newsreel of General de Gaulle's visit to Marseilles he sees a woman resembling Madeleine. "The eyes were pale, and the delicate features recalled some portrait by Lawrence" (100). The authors again use framing metaphors which anticipate *Vertigo's* cinematic techniques. Roger eventually "finds" her in Marseilles under the more vulgar persona of Renée Sourange who gives him the impression of "a badly dubbed film, with some nonentity speaking the part of a star" (110). Like Scottie, he forces her to resemble his lost love by taking her to a boutique, choosing her perfume, and making her change her hair style. Without that perfume the resurrection would be incomplete" (119). When he finally makes her speak like Madeleine, "the sound of their steps, the silence of the things round them, the paintings and the portraits, reminded him of the Louvre with aching intensity" (121).

Finally, the successful nature of his Pygmalion dominance not only evokes parallels between himself and Paul but also anticipates those sinister ones between Scottie and Gavin Elster. "He signed and took her into a room full of models of boats and ships—caravans, galleys, tartans, and a three-decker complete with all its guns and an exquisite network of rigging" (121).

Although the novel does not contain a flashback similar to Judy's in *Vertigo*, the reader guesses the truth when Roger discovers Pauline's necklace in Renée's possession. The revelation occurs two-thirds through the novel and parallels the point at which Hitchcock makes his later cinematic revelation. Roger begins drinking again. Like Scottie, Roger begins the psychological torture of his victim by resurrecting Madeleine's image even further. "He only wanted to remodel the shape of her head, giving it the noble line, the serenity of a Leonardo. To put it differently, he was painting the portrait of the Madeleine he remembered" (136). He follows Renée to a hotel where she registers under the name Pauline Lagerlac. At this point, she wears a grey suit. Renée then writes Roger a full letter of confession but it blows away in the wind during a struggle. (149)

Despite Renée's submission, Roger persists in psychopathologically recreating his lost love. The novelists describe this intensity in musical terms anticipating Bernard Herrmann's different romantic *Liebestod* soundtrack composition. "In despair, he squeezed her arm. In the murky twilight he could now identify her with absolute certainty, by her step, her scent, and the hundred and one other details that love can interpret so unerringly. Vague snatches of music, an accordion, a mandolin, came to them from somewhere or other. Behind them, an occasional blast of a siren sounded like some wild nocturnal beast." (151)

Once Renée confesses to her involvement in Paul's plot by impersonating his wife, Roger becomes angered at the collapse of his romantic dream and strangles her when she refuses to become Madeleine. Despite knowing the full reality of the situation, he denies it and pathologically desires the return of his lost illusion. The novel ends with Roger arrested. He kisses the dead girl before the police take him away. "I shall wait for you", he said." (159)

The above plot synopsis reveals that Hitchcock borrowed much from the original novel. But rather than uttering "Gotcha!" and attacking the director's supposed lack of originality, it is important to examine the transformations and changes Hitchcock made to his source material. *Vertigo* appears a generation after the original period of *D'Entre les Morts* and in a different country. It is a Hitchcock film from Paramount studios geared to different cultural circumstances. Roger now becomes James Stewart's Scottie Ferguson, a role tailored to an actor associated with normal all-American guy characters in popular memory. However, the "film noir" segment of Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life* (1947) revealed a far more tormented and vulnerable aspect of the actor's person-

ality, one Hitchcock and Anthony Mann in his Westerns used to good effect in the 50s. As originally conceived, Roger is a masochistic male figure resembling those psychologically disturbed males in the universe of David Goodis and Cornell Woolrich whose work can never be described in any way as "hard-boiled" masculine works of fiction in the tradition of James M. Cain and Dashiell Hammett. Although revered by the French for alternative depictions of masculine dilemmas, the Goodis/Woolrich male persona is not one American cinema audiences would feel comfortable with, at least, initially. Hitchcock's casting strategy uses the "Jimmy Stewart" persona and tears it apart to reveal a "beast in the closet". *Vertigo's* famous opening sequence makes Roger's malady of the original novel into a crucial section of the film. *Vertigo* suddenly subverts the male control associated with an actor usually regarded as a reassuring representative of American patriarchal values in popular films such as *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954) and *Strategic Air Command* (1955). The ailment suddenly appears from nowhere and reduces Scottie from man-of-action into a state of helpless vulnerability. As others have noticed, the sequence ends with both Scottie and the audience placed in a position of insecurity. Hitchcock's changes to *D'Entre les Morts* resemble an artist painting over an already completed canvas who decides to keep some features and develop others into more creative patterns. The original models from *D'Entre les Morts* exist in *Vertigo*. But they are transformed in significantly new directions to become part of an essential Hitchcock universe of male desire and male anxiety. Scottie and Madeleine/Judy still exhibit problematic patterns of behavior, but they become changed into representing a particular human condition. They do not merely exhibit individual pathological case-histories of the original characters viewers can safely distance themselves from. As Wood points out, the difference between book and novel involves aspects of mood, tone, and meaning. "The drab, willful pessimism of *D'Entre les Morts* is an essentially different world from the intense tragic sense of *Vertigo*, which derives from a simultaneous awareness of the immense value of human relationships and their inherent incapability of perfect realization." (109)

In his later more psychoanalytic and political exploration of the film, Wood traces Scottie's predicament to "the nature of desire and how it is constituted in patriarchal culture" (384). Two significant characters in *Vertigo* who do not exist in *D'Entre les Morts* are extremely relevant to this interpretation: Midge and the nun who appears in the climactic scene on the bell tower. If, as opposed to the original source novel, *Vertigo* contains wider implications paralleling *Wuthering Heights's* relationship to "the social and literary history of its own time", it is one involving the psychological construction of human identity in western culture.

Although the Freudian paradigm has recently faced attack for its Eurocentric connotations, it is still an important model (naturally subject to revision and reinterpretation), for explaining certain cultural aspects of patriarchal behavior in drastic need of radical change. Scottie's desire for Madeleine derives from a regressive male desire denying dependence and a repressed polymorphous sexual identity. It has associations with the male child's original relation to the mother and the social construction of identity within the family. As Michel Schneider notes in *Neurosis and Civilization*, the Oedipal trajectory is really culturally determined according to a process whereby the male child must separate himself from the mother and femininity to move towards socially acceptable masculine roles. However, like the Oedipal trajectory itself, the process is often never entirely successful and the male child may react aggressively towards any threatening feminine object challenging his hegemony in any way. In *Vertigo*, Barbara Bel Geddes's Midge is both androgynous and feminine in appearance, an independent woman with an (implicitly) active sexual life. But she is also described as "motherly" and a reminder to Scottie of his own inner dependence. Midge becomes Melanie

Klein's "bad mother" not only by refusing Scottie her breast but also by demystifying the romantic male's yearning for a lost object. She designs brassieres, wishes "her boy" to be more mature, and makes the mistake of destroying his illusion by her parodic portrait of Carlotta. Her action also parallels Madeleine/Judy who moves from being the desired Kleinian "good object" to the "bad object" after Scottie realizes the illusory nature of his romantic yearning. After realizing Scottie's hopeless dependence on a lost figure and his maternal dependency, Midge leaves the film for ever. Her departure parallels Madeleine's and anticipates *Vertigo's* final loss. It forms an appropriate conclusion to the first part of the film.

After wandering like a "lost soul" in San Francisco like Carlotta in the past and Madeleine in the recent present, Scottie finally discovers the missing mother in the presence of Judy. However, unlike *D'Entre les Morts*, the latter part of *Vertigo* intuitively sympathizes with the plight of Judy who finds herself used and abused by another male who dominates her in a different, yet similar, manner to Gavin Elster's. Her earlier concealed relationship with her stepfather in Kansas is also pertinent. Yet Scottie's psychopathology is not masochistically nurtured like Roger's in *D'Entre les Morts* but results from a social construction of identity harmful both to himself and others. Although both texts clearly share patterns of voyeurism, male aggression, and doomed romanticism, *Vertigo* develops these themes into a critique of a human condition based upon a western system of values harmful to males and females trapped within its ideological and psychopathological confines. This particular "structure of meaning" (Raymond Williams) raises *Vertigo* above *D'Entre les Morts* despite their basic similarities.

Vertigo moves towards its conclusion on the bell tower. Judy appears momentarily to convince the punitive Scottie of her genuine love for him. Scottie echoes Madeleine's final words "Too late, it's too late." He concludes, "There's no bringing her back." Judy appeals to him. "Please!" As William Rothman observes, "He does not ask for proof of Judy's love; he believes her, as he had the first time. Whatever the woman in his arms has done and whoever she is, he loves and forgives her." (168) But the culturally coded image of mother returns to condemn Judy for her transgression of patriarchal values. She looks away from Scottie, sees a shadowy figure, and falls to her death. This figure is a nun who appears briefly but crucially. The nun symbolizes many things: a virginal Sister of Mary expressing a celibacy inimical to human desire, a punitive avatar of Hitchcock's own Catholicism, the ghost of Madeleine Elster, the reincarnation of the ghostly doomed mother Carlotta Valdes, and Hitchcock's patriarchally repressive authoritarian side. Her actual meaning is difficult to define. But her ambiguous presence is crucial here. Appearing at a pivotal moment, the nun is the final maternal figure to appear. Her sudden arrival disrupts for ever any possible reunion, forgiveness, and mutual personal development that Scottie and Madeleine/Judy might have achieved. A punitive patriarchally-inscribed mother figure emerges to destroy a woman who temporarily attempts to turn the male away from those self-destructive and destructive tendencies infecting his entire personality from birth onwards. The nun's abrupt appearance also foreshadows the sudden, shadowy, intrusion of "Mrs. Bates" into the shower in *Psycho*. "Her" action destroys for ever any chance of Marion Crane's advancing beyond her own "private trap." Has Scottie unconsciously yearned for this figure to appear as if wishing not to avoid the implications of his brief insight into his civilized and savage form of conditioning? It is impossible to be certain. Whether accidental or not, the nun's appearance represents the violent return of a culturally punitive psychic mechanism. It is almost as if Hitchcock is making a veiled allusion to Emile Zola's last novel *Verité* (1903) in which the novelist recognizes the ways an oppressive Catholic religion attempts to manipulate and

use women as a reactionary ideological force in the cultural battle for mind control.

As Julia Kristeva notes in her essay "Stabat Mater", Western society urgently needs a new discourse on maternity to replace those unsatisfactory traditional cultural codes affecting both males and females. She points out that "we live in a civilization where the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood. If, however, one looks at it closely, this motherhood is the *fantasy* that is nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory; what is more, it involves less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the *relationship* that binds us to her, one that cannot be localized—an idealization of primary narcissism" (161). Kristeva notes the problematic development of the fourth-century asceticism grafted on to the image of the Virgin Mary which links sexuality and death. "Since they are mutually implicated with each other, one cannot avoid the one without fleeing the other. This asceticism, applicable to both sexes, was vigorously expressed by John Chrysostom (*On Virginity*: 'For where there is death there is also sexual copulation, and where there is no death there is no sexual copulation either')." In other words, despite Kristeva's criticisms of Freud, *Vertigo* exhibits another tragic example of a human condition plagued by the continual battle between *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Thus in *Vertigo's* final drama, the fantasy image of a culturally coded mother emerges from the shadows, as if in a horror film, to destroy whatever alternative potentials exist within the fleeting self-knowledge Scottie and Judy briefly possess at that moment.

Judy screams and falls to her death. Scottie stands numbly by as the nun ironically rings a bell which may denote spiritual salvation but which can also signify psychic damnation. Mother's boy finally stands on his own feet looking at a dead object whose demise is necessary for his male construction. The final image is creatively and ambiguously meaningful. Wood states, "He is cured, but empty, desolate. Triumph and tragedy are indistinguishably fused." (129) But far beyond *D'Entre les Morts*, *Vertigo* creatively embodies that peculiarly transformative nature of artistic creation, one exemplified by Kristeva. "Might not modern art then be, for the few who are attached to it, the implementation of that maternal love—a veil of death, in death's very site and with full knowledge of the facts? A sublimated celebration of incest..." (177).

Perhaps. But it may also signify an important awareness of things in need of change, an awareness briefly recognized by Hitchcock, his fictional creations, and ourselves. The challenge remains.

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Notes on the Long Take in George Cukor's *A Life of Her Own*¹

by Edward R. O'Neill

"In my case, style must be largely the absence of style."

— George Cukor

Introduction: Two Misconceptions about George Cukor

In this essay I should like to attack two misconceptions about George Cukor. One misconception is rather large, and the other quite small, but since they are equally wrong and wrong for related reasons, it will be possible to attack the small one in order to get at the larger one.

The larger misconception is just this: Cukor didn't care or know much about the camera or how to move it. He left the planning of the camera's movements to others. He gave equally little consideration to montage and similarly relegated its concern to other professionals.

On this view, what is good and important in Cukor's films can be narrowed down to the category of *mise en scene*: Cukor's control of his performers and his elegant visual taste was restricted entirely to this domain. If Cukor occasionally resorted to sustained takes or even sequence shots—a single scene being captured in an uninterrupted shot—these generally involve no camera movement, as in the justly famous prison interview in *Adam's Rib*.

The smaller misconception has the distinction of having been shared by Cukor himself: that his 1950 film *A Life of Her Own* (starring Lana Turner and Ray Milland) was among the director's worst if not the very worst of his films. A brief but precise examination of *A Life of Her Own*, though, will demonstrate that the movement of the camera is extensive, that the camera is often carefully positioned and moved to create takes lasting between one and several minutes, that these long takes are sometimes disguised with insert shots, and that while these long takes are indeed directly related to Cukor's *forte* in directing performers, there is no need to conceive of performance itself as antithetical to cinema.

Thus a very small issue—the length of the shots in one film—can help lead us to larger issues in thinking about Cukor and about how theoretical issues about what was once called the "nature of cinema" are framed in film studies.

Theater Versus Cinema?

But even as strong an admirer as Katharine Hepburn sometimes compared Cukor unflatteringly to more 'visual' directors: "David Lean was a master of moviemaking... I don't think Cukor had that mastery, the pictorial imagination that Lean had." (346). If "masters" get credited with being "pictorial" or visual, this of course puts Cukor on the side not of pictures but of words. Even an early champion of Cukor, Charles Champlin, called the director "one of the most *literate* storytellers" (emphasis supplied, 343).²

However congratulatory such remarks, their implication is that

there is something deficient about Cukor, and when such detractors wrote of *My Fair Lady* that the director "failed to use the medium," Cukor's response was one of puzzlement: "I wish I knew what they meant" (293). Indeed, in what follows I'll be arguing that we should be more puzzled than we are by such remarks about "the medium."

Even when Levy summarizes the defense against these charges by saying that Cukor "used the medium self-effacingly to re-create a theatrical experience in the cinema" (294), the implication seems to be that cinema and theater are or should be distinct as *artistic media*, and that in Cukor the medium's "self-effacement" has made cinema into a neutral vehicle which merely transports something already pre-given: a "theatrical experience" which is being re-created.

These diverse commentators thus assume more than an opposition between a visual cinema and a verbal theater. These commentators assume a more ontological opposition between a spontaneous and autonomous, self-determining creativity on the one hand and a dependent, secondary and derivative imitation on the other. In these criticisms, cinema is assumed to aspire to the condition of an independent, self-creating art, where Cukor's reliance on theater reduces cinema not just to theater but to a certain model of theater. What is assumed is that performance and theatricality themselves are essentially *mimetic*: they involve replaying something written down beforehand, interpreting a text which is given, and supplementing an original in the form of a copy. Cukor's films, on this view, get reduced to mimetism by their emphasis upon performance.

The "Cukor Problem"

Thus it is the very theatricality of Cukor's work, often held up for praise, which has actually *impoverished* Cukor criticism: Cukor presents a problem for critics because he is not "cinematic," "pictorial," etc. Francois Truffaut grouped Cukor with Kazan—another director from a theatrical background—by saying "Cukor isn't the kind of director you write about; he's someone to talk about with friends on the street or sitting in a café" (quoted in Levy at 346). Or, as Edward Buscombe said about Cukor: "He is a great director, but there is, *literally*, nothing to say about him" (emphasis supplied, quoted in Levy at 347).

In a sense, these insights by Truffaut and Buscombe are useful

1 This essay is a very abbreviated version of a much longer original essay. It was abbreviated at the request and with the help of the editors, Robin Wood and Richard Lippe, for which I here give thanks. Thanks also to Martin Parea, with whom I watched the film and whose views on it shaped my own.

2. Emanuel Levy, *George Cukor, Master of Elegance* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1994). Subsequent references to Levy's admirable volume will be cited within the text by page number.



A Life of Her Own: Lily (Lana Turner) and Steve (Ray Milland).



Lily awakes to find Steve watching her.

Life and theatricality—Steve and Lily enact the domestic couple.



precisely because they expose a problem with Cukor criticism rather than with Cukor. The fact that one might want to “talk” about Cukor with friends in a social atmosphere rather than writing about him—presumably for strangers—suggests a deficiency of critical means to be able to discuss things that might really be meaningful to us and to our friends.

In writings about Eisenstein, Hitchcock or Welles, for instance, one can point to and describe specific formal details of editing and camerawork which catch our attention, which exceed norms, and which seem to produce specific kinds of meaning: the extreme dynamic contrasts of the Odessa steps sequence, the unusually quick cuts of the *Psycho* shower sequence, or the exceptionally long tracking shot that opens *Touch of Evil*. But if a director’s work is characterized, as Levy says, by “self-effacement, a light touch, and

invisibility as a style” (346), then what is there *visibly* to point to?

Indeed, Cukor himself was well aware of this self-effacing credo. Of the camera, he said: “You mustn’t show off with the camera” (136). Of the director’s style: “[H]is touch is not immediately recognizable” (137). Of his own style: “In my case, style must be largely the absence of style.” Of his goal, that it was to leave “no visible sign of direction” (emphasis supplied, 347).

What little the Cukor Problem *does* say about Cukor is that there must be something about Cukor’s style which has allowed it to escape our notice, and this something, this imperceptibility, should itself be characterized. That is: one of the things which needs to be explained about Cukor is how his very self-effacement may be discerned.

What the difficulty of writing about Cukor says about *us* is that

it's easier for us to point to formal details of editing and camerawork, especially when they deviate from norms, than it is to talk about performance or unexceptional practices. The current essay will not entirely escape these issues, but both of these issues—camerawork and editing vs. performance on the one hand and deviations vs. norms on the other—can be reduced to the issue of performance.

Namely, if we feel that there's not much to say about performance, this is because we have already reduced performance to something which is neutrally captured and recorded by the camera instead of thinking of the camera and its filming as a condition for experiencing and reading performances.³ And if we can analyze deviations more easily than norms, this bespeaks a romantic fixation on the image of an autonomous will which can *only* express itself in the *violation* of rules rather than in the *manner* in which these rules are executed or *performed*.

Thus the ability to describe unusual technical details of editing and camerawork returns us to the need to conceptualize performance as something other than a mere recorded datum in order to break out of the critical deadlocks which make Cukor's talents unspeakable. The fact of there being "nothing" to say about Cukor can thus be traced *both* to the necessity of conceiving of film as an autonomous medium to be distinguished from theater *and* to an impoverished conception of theater and performance as itself *mimetic*—imitative, secondary, derivative, interpretive.

If, however, we were able to rely on a conception of performance and theatricality as originary and primary, we might be able to have more to say about Cukor—to solve the "Cukor Problem." In the current essay, I will analyze camerawork—the use of long takes—and editing—the way the takes are cut together—in Cukor's *A Life of Her Own*. That is, I will analyze formal elements *aside from* performance in order to relate these elements *to* performance. Although this sidesteps the crucial issue of how we talk about the element of performance, it is a necessary "workaround," as they say, since the analysis of shot length and editing is familiar and concrete enough to make evident certain aspects of performance for which we perhaps do not yet have an adequate vocabulary—even despite some wonderful efforts.⁴

"In One Shot"

Claudette Colbert, who starred in the Cukor film *Zaza*, remembers that Cukor "never took unnecessary takes" (105). And forty years later Cukor would take umbrage while filming *Travels with My Aunt*, according to actor Alec McCowen, when the cameraman would make a suggestion about the camera's placement (341).

But it is a memory of Glynis Johns that is most pertinent in the current context. One scene in *The Chapman Report* was quite long. "Normally a director would shoot it in two or three shots and then cover it with over the shoulder and close-up shots. But," Johns remembers, "Cukor said, 'This is going to be done in one shot.'" And such was the care of the preparation that the actors "did only one take, and that's the one [Cukor] printed" (265).

In examining *A Life of Her Own*, it is Johns' memory—"This is going to be done in one shot"—which is borne out by an actual examination of the film. How far this is true for other Cukor films, I can't say, as that scope of investigation is past my means at the current time. But I think the fact that Johns is right and that Cukor could and did frequently stage scenes in long, even single takes can go some ways towards demonstrating *not* that Cukor is really "cinematic" after all but *rather* that the way in which a formal analysis of "cinematic" elements can in fact disclose an aspect of performance which escapes the reduction to a mimetic conception.

Deep Space and Deep Time

If the length of Cukor's takes is somehow a clue to the director's status in an aesthetic hierarchy, this need not mean that we take

existing evaluations of the merit of long takes at face value nor import all their baggage. In "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," to take one prominent example, French critic André Bazin argued that editing was not undesirable or unproductive in itself, since montage could denote diverse spaces and times simultaneously, as in the case of cross-cutting. But for Bazin forms of montage like the Soviet ideational type which create new meanings above and beyond a spatiotemporal denotation are not desirable because they involve "the creation of a sense or meaning not proper to the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition" (25).

Bazin's interest in long takes was similarly grounded in his conception of cinema as a recording of reality. For Bazin the purpose of cinema was not to add to reality but to reveal it, not to connote but to denote, not to be figural or rhetorical but literal. Thus the long take in Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* when Nanook waits for his prey (the seal) captures for Bazin "the actual length of the waiting period" and is thus preferable to the construction of this time as a signification created through editing. For Bazin the return to deep space and to long takes—to "deep time," as it were—in directors like Orson Welles and William Wyler during the 1940s signified precisely a new and desirable evolution of cinema. By recording space and time more accurately, long takes, like deep focus, would bring the spectator into closer touch with reality.

But while it is correct to say that Bazin has a Platonic preference for the thing itself over its signification, denotation over connotation, recording over rhetoric, it is *not* true that Bazin imagined an *unambiguous* reality. Rather, ideational montage is undesirable for Bazin precisely because it negates the ambiguity which makes it possible, an ambiguity Bazin associates with reality itself. That is: in order for shots to create new meanings when combined, there must be the possibilities of new meanings latent in the uncombined shots. Ideational montage thus selects specific meanings from the images it combines, effectively negating others.⁵

It is this ambiguity which for Bazin characterizes reality itself. An increase in the spatial depth and temporal duration of individual shots thus re-introduces a plurality and ambiguity which is potentially occluded by the combination of shots. What Bazin means by this "reality" is not the determination of particular things but rather the indetermination and ambiguity which for him characterizes "reality."⁶

In what follows, I will try to support *both* Bazin's conception of the role of "depth of time" as potentially revealing ambiguities in precisely the dramatic or theatrical organization of a spatiotemporal continuum, while also trying to treat the length of Cukor's takes as playing a kind of formal role of being a necessary precondition for certain 'compositional' effects within the staging of dramatic action.⁷ I will argue that Cukor's use of long takes exposes an ambivalence that is part of performing and of the theatrical organization of space and time, an organization that precisely organizes ambivalence.

Long Takes in *A Life of Her Own*

The story of *A Life of Her Own* hardly alerts potential viewers to the film's interest: the film is easily but quite accurately summarized as a series of clichés. Lily James leaves Imperia, Kansas for New York

3 Here I am perhaps coming close to understanding the camera as a condition of what is filmed in Stanley Cavell's sense—closer than I wish. See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979).

4 I am thinking, for example, of James Naremore's *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988).

5 One could doubtless argue the contrary as well: that additive montage cancels yet preserves concrete determinations and thus gives rise to new ambiguities, but such is not my goal here.

6 Brian Henderson maintains an interest in the long take, but in relation, as in the current essay, to *mise-en-scène*: "The long take is the presupposition or a priori of *mise-en-scène*, that is, the ground or field in which *mise-en-scène* can occur. It is the time necessary for *mise-en-scène* space."

City, where she plans to become a fashion model. She immediately sees the dangers of her plan when the once-successful model Mary Ashlon (Ann Dvorak) gives Lily advice and a good luck charm and then jumps to her death from her penthouse window, and when subsequently Mary's former beau Lee Gorrance (Barry Sullivan) makes advances on Lily.

Nevertheless, through good luck and hard work Lily becomes a top fashion model, but she finds something's missing. When she meets a rich but married copper mine owner Steve Harleigh (Ray Milland) through a lawyer of their mutual acquaintance (Louis Calhern), Lily's found what was missing, and she and Steve begin an affair.

But when Steve's wife Nora, who was paralyzed in an auto accident Steve caused, shows up, Lily decides to tell Steve's wife the truth about the affair. At the last minute, however, Lily relents and breaks off the affair with Steve.

In the end, Lily runs into Mary's former beau Lee Gorrance but again turns down his advances. Looking up to the apartment from which Mary jumped to her death, Lily smashes the "good luck" charm Mary gave her and strides purposefully off into the distance.

Aside from a few twists, like the paralyzed wife, the story sounds oddly familiar; the shooting style is nevertheless atypical. If film textbooks are right about the omnipresence of shot-reverse shot for photographing dialogue scenes, *A Life of Her Own* does not fit the rule, since there are only three such scenes shot mostly in this style in the entire film, the first of which occurs a full 40 minutes into the film.⁸ What is often assumed to be more characteristic of Cukor, the static long take of an entire scene (or "sequence shot") takes place only once and is thus not typical of the shooting style in this film.⁹

While it is hard to give exact figures for the average shot length in a film of the same year as *A Life of Her Own* (1950), an average of between 600 and 1,000 shots in a 75- to 110-minute film would make a reasonable starting point, and this averages to between 4 and 11 seconds per shot. But 45 or so shots from *A Life of Her Own*, however, are long enough to make up between 60 and 70 minutes of the film, depending on how one adds them up.¹⁰ In other words, of the 108-minute film, between half and two thirds of the film is in these 45 long takes—a remarkable 71 minutes or an average shot length of from 85 to 90 seconds.

The point is not to count shots and timings, however, but rather (a) to show *how* this length of take was achieved, (b) to ask *why* Cukor bothered and what effects these long takes have and above all (c) to ask why this strategy has gone unnoticed—even by fans of the director.

Disguising the Long Take

Here two distinctions must be made in order to perceive what is relevant in *A Life of Her Own*. First, we must distinguish between the duration of individual shots and the role of those shots in relation to the space-time they are meant to denote. The duration of a shot is more *noticeable* when it becomes equivalent with the spatiotemporal unity of an entire scene—the so-called "sequence shot" in which an entire spatiotemporally continuous dramatic unit is captured in a single shot.

Second, we need to distinguish between static and mobile long takes. By combining the two distinctions, we can recognize that it is only static sequence shots in which Cukor's use of the camera and avoidance of editing has been recognized. That is: while Cukor's static sequence shots have been singled out for praise, if not for examination, the *mobile* long takes, whether sequence shots or not, have passed unnoticed—and this was precisely their design.

If it is the "theatricality" of Cukor's static sequence shots which critics have underlined, this amounts to "theatricality" in a negative sense: staginess, positioning the spectator and actors in a fixed, proscenium-like position. But by examining the mobile long takes in *A Life of Her Own* it is possible to analyze Cukor's "theatricality"

in a more ramified sense. In order to do so, however, one must first show the strategies Cukor used to downplay the very technique of the long take at the same time he was exploiting it.

First, the mobility of the camera, together with movement of characters within the frame, helps to disguise the length of the takes by giving variety to the character positions within the frame and to the framing itself. But this variety is counterbalanced by symmetry and repetition. Cukor carefully shifts the actors right and left, upstage and downstage, from seated to standing, so that their positions relative to the camera are constantly shifting but usually balanced. In other words, Cukor does with staging what Raymond Bellour discerns that Hawks, Hitchcock and others do with the camera: counterbalance change with repetition.¹¹

Although numerous scenes could be pointed to as evidence of the use of figure and camera movement to disguise a long take, for the sake of economy only one shot and one segment of a shot will be described.

When Steve takes Lily to a roadside diner to eat, the two watch the stand's owner and his son argue over whether or not the father should help his son buy an old jalopy which is visible outside the diner's window. The staging of the scene continually uses two levels of depth and also of height within the frame: Steve and Lily sit downstage (i.e., closer to the camera) and the father and son stand upstage. When Steve agrees to examine the car, he accompanies the father outside screen right, and the two are still visible in deep focus through the window. While Steve and the father are standing outside, the son sits with Lily inside, so that while the character positions have changed, two are still seated and two standing, two upstage and two downstage.¹²

When the father and Steve re-enter, the father crosses downstage to get the money from the register and to give it to his son, and Steve returns to his seat. The father's movement has brought him and the son closer to the camera than the seated pair, thus foregrounding the moment of the father's generous change of heart. When the ecstatic son exits to get into the noisy car and drive off, the camera pans to the extreme right to follow the son and his friend and to show them driving off.

While the shot lasts almost two minutes, the director's choreography disguises the shot's duration by frequently shifting the characters' distance from the camera, height within the frame and relative positions, while nevertheless maintaining symmetry: if two are seated and two standing, *who* is seated and *who* standing may change, but the ratio does not; which pair is closer to the camera changes, but the opposition between the pairs remains constant.

Even just one segment of another long take demonstrates the degree of complexity and symmetry Cukor manages to balance in his staging. When Lily entertains her attorney friend Jim Leversoe and Jim's client Steve Harleigh at Jim's apartment, the scene begins with a close-up of Lily's hand turning on a record. The camera pulls back to show Lily standing screen left balanced against Jim and Steve screen right, standing and seated respectively. When Lily pantomimes a part of her story, her action allows her to cross from screen left to screen right, and the camera follows her and re-frames the trio as she sits at the table which had previously been offscreen right. Where before Lily was on the right, now she is on the left; where before she was standing now she is seated.

Later in the same shot, Jim has seated himself between Steve and Lily so that all three are at the same level: Steve, Jim and Lily. When Jim rises and walks upstage (and out of focus), he remains in the middle of the frame, so that the three characters' respective positions remain the same, even if Jim has shifted his height within the frame and distance from the camera. After Jim returns downstage, remaining standing, Lily and Steve both rise and cross left and right respectively so that their positions are the reverse of what they had been when the trio was seated at the table: where before the order was Steve, Jim, Lily seated, now they stand in the order Lily, Jim, Steve.



The roadside diner scene: a mobile camera and movement within the frame.

The point in analyzing the specific movements in these portions of this single long take is to demonstrate the way Cukor disguises the length of the take with camera and figure movement, by managing these movements symmetrically: the camera moves right then left; characters reverse screen positions, change height within the frame and distance from the camera, but all these changes are controlled by other elements remaining constant.

Insert Shots and Non-Semantic Elements

Another reason that mobile long takes are not easily recognized in *A Life of Her Own* is that in a number of scenes, an entire segment of a scene which is recognizable as a single continuous shot has been interrupted with inserted close-ups. The central example here is the long sequence in which Lily arrives at New York's Caraway agency and watches agency head Tom Caraway (Tom Ewell) give a would-be model lessons in posture and deportment, then comfort Mary Ashlon, the once-successful model who seeks to revive her career.

The former segment runs a little over three minutes, while the latter runs almost four minutes. In both cases, the viewer can readily recognize that the entire segment is a single shot with the exception of close-ups of Lana Turner which emphasize her character's reactions to the scenes which unfold before her. Whether these insert shots are a result of flubbed long takes, an attempt to emphasize the star, or lack of faith in the technique of the long take itself is difficult to say. What is important in the present context is the careful and complex choreography of performers and the camera which is implied by the shooting style, even if the end result is not itself a continuous shot.

One reason these long takes are sometimes not noticeable is that the classical Hollywood pattern of repetition and difference sets these long takes against other scenes such that the repetition

makes the shooting style less obvious, and other differences instead become significant to the narrative.

Two locations involve repeated scenes shot partially in long takes: the mezzanine of the Betsy Ross Hotel, where Lily stays upon arriving in New York, and the bar Lily frequents with Steve during the initial stages of their affair. After Mary's suicide, Lee Gorrance meets Lily in the hotel mezzanine, at once to clear his own conscience, to comfort Lily and to put the moves on her. The bulk of

7 Here again I am perhaps in danger of collapsing into a certain modernist conception of the role of the medium in the work of art which I had earlier sought to avoid, but I believe the conception of theatricality I am developing is not entirely compatible with the modernist tenet of the "specificity of the medium."

8 These are: the second half of a scene in which Lily and Steve eat hamburgers at a roadside stand and Lily confesses her lack of happiness (about two minutes); Steve's lawyer conveying to Lily a gift Steve ordered bought for her in appreciation of her time showing him the city (under two minutes); the confrontation between Lily and Steve's wife Nora (about five minutes).

9 The scene is the once-successful model Mary giving advice over cocktails to the neophyte Lily.

10 I will argue below that several separate shots are recognizable as a single long take with insert shots. The difference in the total running time of the film's long takes thus depends on whether one counts these interrupted but still recognizable long takes as long takes or not. Even if one does not, however, over half *A Life of Her Own's* running time can be found in less than 50 shots—which averages out to just under a minute per shot.

11 See, for example, Raymond Bellour, "Symboliques" in *Le Cinéma Américain* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980).

12 There is no naturalistic reason the son could not accompany the father to examine the car, nor that the son's friend should come inside to lend moral support in the plea with the father. Nor is there any particular reason that the son should seat himself with the diner patron. The only reason for these movements is not naturalistic but rather formal: to create symmetry in the character positioning. Whatever naturalistic reason we may infer for these movements can only have been created after-the-fact in order to justify the formal pattern itself.



The Caraway Agency: Tom Caraman (Tom Ewell) and aging model Mary Ashlon (Ann Dvorak).



Lily watches a lesson in staging and performance.

the scene is a take of over two minutes, and during the scene Lily rejects Gorrance in no uncertain terms.

After Lily's first date with Steve, they go to the same spot. The space itself is significant because it's the only place in the women-only hotel where men are allowed. This gender segregation impels Steve and Lily to seek out the bar and eventually to rent an apartment where they can conduct their affair (though this is never stated explicitly). When Steve ends a date with Lily by chatting in the hotel mezzanine, the largest part of the scene is a shot of about 1 3/4 minutes. Both the location and the long take are the same as when Lily met Gorrance in the same spot, but everything else contrasts dramatically—the character of the encounter, the number of

people around. Thus since the element of the long take is held constant, it is not part of a formal contrast that results in narrative significance and hence becomes less perceptible.

Symmetrical Long Takes

Again, since the same shooting style is used in both scenes, the style itself apparently becomes devoid of narrative significance.¹³ More remarkable, however, is Cukor's organization of long takes symmetrically within a scene. That is, Cukor constructs a scene not of one shot but rather of a very small number of shots whose heads and tails may be joined together with shot-reverse shot in order to construct an apparently ordinary and in all events symmetrically proportioned scene. We can position this method part-way between the more noticeable sequence shot and the simpler use of a long take as an element within a scene.

Among scenes shot in this way are some of the film's most crucial and most affecting. When Lily takes the drunk (and probably high¹⁴) Mary home from their disastrous double date, the almost four-minute-long scene of Lily trying to comfort Mary is captured in two mobile long takes with shot-reverse shot linking the end of one to the beginning of the next. That is: one mobile long take ends on character A, and the next mobile long take begins on character B such that the two long takes can be joined with shot-reverse shot (A/B/A/B). The editing pattern makes the join between the long takes less noticeable by repeating it.¹⁵

Examples could be multiplied.¹⁶ The point is that not only does Cukor use long takes as elements within scenes, but he organizes these shots, whether there are two or three of them, symmetrically and either uses editing or location to disguise the seams. Camera and character mobility, classical repetition and symmetry can thus account for *how* Cukor could achieve long takes short of the sequence shot without this being noticed, but it does not yet explain *why* he would want to do so.

Long Takes and the Theatrical Organization of Social Space

Why then did Cukor use these long takes? While not every noticeably long take in *A Life of Her Own* necessarily translates immediately into some specific theatrical element, a number of the long takes do fall into broad categories which delineate a theatrical organization of social behavior. My question here is *not* about how theatricality becomes a part of the viewer's *experience* nor precisely the *meaning* of the text, but rather how this formative element of the process of creation becomes—in a modernist vein—a part of the subject matter of the work itself.¹⁷

Namely, Cukor uses long takes to emphasize the *work* of staging itself, the theatrical organization of social life as itself a staging of performances, and the power of human action to create human realities—realities which collapse rather more easily than they were created. It is not a question of art *imitating* life here, nor vice-versa, but rather of theater as drawing on the same organizational *means* of what is crudely called "life."

For example, Cukor repeatedly stages social events in such a way that a prominently positioned observer converts the event into a performance by giving the event a fore/stage backstage distinction.¹⁸ When Lily arrives at the Caraway office, long takes frame the potential leg model being asked to perform. She is not being asked to perform for the camera, but rather for on-screen characters whose efforts at staging her we then watch.

Or, when another model who arrives at the Caraway Agency at the same time as Lily is given a lesson in posture and make-up, our apprehension of this event is controlled so that neither we nor the film's protagonist are the exact addressees of the lessons being given. Rather, we get a sidelong view in which the lesson is being addressed to a pupil *while the protagonist watches*. While one might not take seriously advice like "Don't make up, make down" and "The graceful S-posture when moderated is most attractive for social usage," we are invited to enjoy this empty chit-chat because

we are neither its addressee nor are we invested in its addressee's success.

In such scenes it is the effect upon the on-screen spectator and the way she apprehends the unfolding performance that is paramount. The nature and focus of our involvement are shifted from the performance to its appreciation *qua* performance. Two other examples suggest themselves in this context. The long take in which the hamburger stand owner is convinced to buy his son an old jalopy, and, quite differently, Nora's party for Steve at which she performs what she calls a "stunt" involving simulating walking with the help of crutches.

In both these scenes the crucial factor is not the success or failure of the performance itself—Will the boy convince his father to buy him the jalopy? Will Nora's rehabilitation be successful—but rather the onlooker's apprehension of this performance. It is Lily and Steve's appreciation of how little can make the young man and his father happy which is crucial in the former scene, and it is the anguish that Steve will feel if his wife does indeed recover and his pain at her struggles on his behalf which are central to the film's narrative.

Spatiotemporal Continuity and the Forestage/Backstage Distinction: Or, Laugh, Clown, Laugh.

It is exactly the spatiotemporal continuity of the shot which exposes the theatrical organization of social behavior in the shape of the onstage/offstage distinction, a distinction which is at once spatial and temporal. Specifically, when behavior is arranged in relation to the long take such that we can see the beginning or end of a performance, then the duration of the shot is itself a part of the temporal organization of the behavior. The duration of the shot *frames* the temporal order of the performance which the shot contains. Editing might contrast forestage and backstage spaces, but only the duration of a take and the mobility of the camera can pass *continuously* from one behaviorally-defined space to the other.

Such is the case in two notable scenes. When Lily sees Steve off at the airport, she feigns a carefree attitude towards his departure, but the take continues after he has left to board the plane, and the camera dollies to follow her down a long ramp to a shadowy area where she stops and bursts into tears.

The performance for Steve is in the Laugh, Clown, Laugh vein, a vein that is mined extensively in *A Life of Her Own* and could be called the film's major theatrical trope. But the significance here is that it is the camera's continuous movement and shooting which follows the transition from the forestage performance to the backstage private area where the performance breaks down. The point is not that Cukor gives us 'real' feelings, but rather that he exploits an aesthetic organization of social space which gives us the feeling of having access to something more private and authentic, and that he uses the camera to do this.

A similar unusual event unfolds when Lily awakes from a nap in her lawyer friend's apartment to find she's being watched by Steve. While the entire scene is not captured in a sequence shot—the scene begins with a shot of Lily, and there is a reverse-shot of Steve watching her when Lily awakes—the remainder of the scene thereafter is a continuous take of about a minute and a half. The dialogue specifically refers to Lily's just having woken up, and the temporal continuity of the shot's duration thus traces the process of Lily's movement from literal unconsciousness to the heightened self-consciousness of performing for another.

The subsequent post-dinner scene is a sequence shot lasting 2 3/4 minutes. Here Lily is fully aware of being watched, and we are aware of this fact for two reasons. First, the scene begins with a close-up of Lily playing a record, and second, the music accompanies Lily's recital of an anecdote about Imperia, Kansas—exactly the kind of "cutie pie story" which Mary Ashlon had predicted Lily's home town would one day become. If this moment is then scripted from beyond the grave by Mary, it is Lily herself who con-

trols the *mise-en-scène*—by controlling the music to accompany her play-acting of her own childhood.

Delegating the Power To Stage

This scene of Lily performing her past thus brings us to another way in which Cukor underlines and controls theatricality and performance in *A Life of Her Own*: by delegating the power to stage scenes—to arrange costumes, lighting, music, and performers—to characters within the film such that the process of staging itself becomes the event being staged.¹⁹ The fact that the film gives a behind-the-scenes look at the world of fashion modeling already positions the spectator to examine the process of staging images, but this process proliferates in the staging of other scenes.

In the several scenes which take place in a bar Lily and Steve frequent when they have no other place to go, the role of the cocktail pianist to provide a commentative musical score and of a ventriloquist to comment openly on the meaning of the events taking place underline the continuity amongst background elements of spectacle and social gathering (the music), foreground elements of attention like the ventriloquist's performance, and the wavering role of the audience which can sometimes become a part of the spectacle itself.

The fact that both the cocktail pianist and the ventriloquist can arguably be read as gay men draws attention to the relation between Cukor's status as a gay man and his work: if as victims of homophobia and under the obligation to stay closeted—which we know Cukor felt to some degree—gay men must become socially other-directed and must also take on a heightened concern with the art of impression management, then the employment of such closet-enforced skill in aesthetically- and theatrically-oriented careers within Cukor's films can be taken as a sly reference to the director's own work of staging.

But it is Lana Turner herself to whom Cukor delegates the bulk of this directorial agency. When Caraway gives Lily a raise to make

13 In the roadside diner scene discussed above, the long take in the earlier portion of the scene counterbalances and contrasts with the shot-reverse shot technique used in the second portion of the scene. Here the contrast in techniques would seem to suggest a contrasting significance to the two portions of the scenes, and while the earlier portion of the scene shows the couple helping a young man get his wish, and the latter portion reveals that Lily's wishes remain unfulfilled, the specific meaning involved in the technique itself is somewhat elusive to me at the moment.

14 When Lily takes Mary home, Mary insists on stopping at a seemingly closed drugstore "for cigarettes." When Mary comes out, she at first doesn't recognize Lily. One inference would be that Mary has scored and shot up while inside the drugstore. But the inference is difficult to verify insofar as the edit linking Lily waiting to Mary coming out of the drugstore cannot be read in terms of the passage of time the edit implies. Thus the absence of time, the possibility of lost time during an edit, which is precisely what the long take avoids, actually plays a significant if inferential role in the film.

15 The scene's single final shot of Lily looking in at Mary staring out the window is only the third camera setup in the scene.

16 When Steve's wife Nora throws him a party, the scene is captured in only two long takes. And when Lily's lawyer friend Jim Leversoe tries to convince her not to tell Steve's wife Nora the truth about the affair, the scene (almost four minutes long) is captured in only three shots which are symmetrically arranged in terms of duration, the first and last being just under a minute, the middle being over two minutes. With this many scenes having a similar structure, it is highly unlikely that the technique is an accident of shooting or editing.

17 Here again I temporarily lapse, even against my own will, into a modernist view I would prefer to resist.

18 Here I am drawing on the analytical framework put forth by Erving Goffman, which Naremore also draws on. See Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston, Massachusetts: Northeastern University Press, 1986).

19 If Raymond Bellour has urged that Hitchcock delegates the enunciatory power to male figures within the narrative who command the power to look and to see, we could contrast Cukor with Hitchcock on this point while also supporting Bellour's general concept of delegating enunciatory power by saying that Cukor delegates the power to stage—especially to women. See Raymond Bellour, "Hitchcock, the Enunciator" in *camera obscura* no. 2 (1977):69-94.

her the highest-paid model in New York City, it is Lily who arranges the setting and the lights for the news, just as she'll later pick the music for her cutie-pie story. In both cases, Lily's act of self-creation, her staging of herself, is created from these details of staging in which it is the very power to stage which is tantamount to a power of self-making.

Playing House.

But it is in Lily's apartment where this process of staging scenes of staging takes on its greatest significance in relation to the use of long takes, since it is in Lily's apartment, as I mentioned above, that a number of scenes are done in one, two or three symmetrically organized, carefully dovetailed shots. It is in this setting that the theatrical aspect of the world of the story is most patently rendered by the director's use of long takes.

When first viewing the apartment, the couple is aware of the fact that the real estate agent at first takes Lily for "Mrs. Harleigh," and even when they disabuse him of this notion, his guiltily knowing glance suggests he knows what the couple know to be the case but do not enjoy seeing reflected back in another's eyes. When, during the realtor's absence, the couple argue, upon the realtor's return the two must compose themselves for the realtor as if acting out a role. Thus the third party's perception or misperception of the couple and their modulation of their behavior with an eye towards how it will be read are recorded by the temporal continuity of the long takes.

In the very next scene, the couple unpack and arrange Lily's things and argue over where the piano should go. This scene is perhaps one of the most touching in the film, and it is so, I think, because the couple are *playing* at being married: they bicker like the proverbial "old married couple," and they take obvious enjoyment in the process. The fact that they are arranging the setting for their play-marriage, as well as Steve's revelation of his ability to play "their song" from the piano bar, help to underline the processes of mise-en-scene and music as part of the play-acting of the *characters*. It is this very exposure of the processes of performance which, ironically, verifies for us the reality of what we are seeing by exposing its very unreality, its playful aspect.

The third scene in the apartment (the scene consisting of three long takes, each in a separate room) is the point at which the game of playing marriage breaks down, and the couple must cope with the reality they have been willfully hiding from themselves. The fact that we see the kitchen here for the first time creates the feeling of seeing backstage, just as in the later party scene in Lily's apartment, Steve and Lily argue in her bedroom which we had not seen until that point. Thus the entire apartment setting is treated by Cukor like a theatrical space of play and fantasy, but one in which the characters' make-believe can breakdown, the forestage come undone by the backstage. It is this tentative making and unmaking of human reality which is perhaps Cukor's central topic.



Lily throws a birthday party for Steve.

Of Resolution—Symbolic and Narrative, Formal and Substantive.

If the carefully symmetrical structures which organize Cukor's long takes in *A Life of Her Own* both from within and from without thus bear the hallmarks of classical Hollywood style, the film's resolution—or lack thereof—suggests more modernist tendencies. Insofar as melodrama concerns a real social contradiction between individual happiness and social order, melodrama's narrative problems are not so easily resolvable, and the conflicts in *A Life of Her Own* certainly place it within that generic context. But the difficulties in interpreting the film's ending reach far enough that they suggest a partial rupture of the classical tendencies the film otherwise exemplifies.

More specifically, the difficulties in resolving the film's problems can be broken down into logical and narrative aspects. In Lily's argument with Jim Leversoe over her decision to break the bad news to Steve's wife, Lily argues a utilitarian line: all three are unhappy with the secret affair, whereas if Steve and Nora divorced, only Nora would be unhappy. According to this rational calculus, Lily's proposed solution is the best: it causes the least suffering because only Nora would suffer.

Jim, on the other hand, argues an absolutist line: some things are simply wrong, and one of those things is breaking up a marriage. After Lily's conversation with Nora, it appears she has suddenly converted to Jim's view, because she tells Steve that she felt something preventing her from breaking the news to Nora. The film's deadlock is thus apparently between two conceptions of morality. The film's logical resolution at the level of action and argument may be that the absolutist conception of morality is the correct one, and some things are simply wrong. Or it may also be that Lily's decision not to tell Nora the truth is based on sympathy and a desire to spare Nora's feelings. Thus the absolutist moral view endorses the melodramatic credo of sacrifice: it is not acceptable to

hurt another but only to hurt oneself.

Lily's change of heart about telling Nora and the heroine's decision to break off her affair with Steve may resolve the immediate dilemma, but it leaves the problem of Lily's happiness unresolved. Lily gives up *both* Steve and her work, the former of which was supposed to provide the happiness not provided by the latter. Since the film has framed Lily's alternatives in terms of work and love, and since work has been shown not to be sufficient to provide her with happiness, and no romantic alternatives have been made available, the film cannot truly resolve the problem it sets out. Lily is thus at the film's end very much in the position of Mary at the film's beginning.

Only a few narrative possibilities for resolving the problem of Lily's happiness remain. She might return to work, but this has not solved the problem before, and Mary's failure to do so stands in our minds against this option. She might find another man but this time an unmarried one: none suitable has been introduced. Lily can thus either go the way of Mary, or she can return to Imperia, Kansas.

This last solution is appealing, since the film began there, and classical symmetry suggests a return might be possible. Instead, two other moments are repeated at the film's end: Lily walks under the construction barricade where Steve kissed her for the first time, and she returns to the place on the street from which Mary had pointed out the penthouse from which she would later jump to her death. It is at this point that Lily produces from her pocket the good luck charm which Mary gave her—a porcelain high-heeled shoe—and smashes it (offscreen) on the sidewalk before walking off into the night as the music swells.

But how is one to interpret this moment? The moment seems to call for a symbolic interpretation: that in breaking Mary's "good luck" charm, Lily is in fact breaking the 'spell' that has bound her in resemblance to Mary, and that now Lily will be free—to work and to love. While symbolism is nice, breaking a small porcelain shoe can hardly make one happy where work and love have failed. The symbolism cannot resolve the narrative problem. Thus the symbolism of the shoe is necessary to resolve symbolically what the film *cannot* resolve narratively.

This symbolic rather than narrative solution fits well procedurally with the repetitions that end the film: Lily goes to the piano bar again, rejects Lee Gorrance again, passes again the place where Steve first kissed her, and stands again where she stood with Mary looking up at Mary's aerie perch. One can justly say that these repetitions provide a *formal* but not a *substantive* resolution to the film, just as the porcelain shoe provides a *symbolic* rather than a *narrative* solution to the problem of Lily's happiness. In the classical mode elements of character, location and even camerawork have been repeated and transformed to produce a feeling of closure without providing any definitive termination to the story's events.

Cukor as Modernist?

While the lack of an effective resolution to Lily's problems may have been part of what displeased Cukor about the film, it is the very lack of closure which points toward similar but mostly unrecognized elements in Cukor's work. If Cukor's propensity for location shooting during the 1950s fits with what might be dubbed Hollywood's flirtation with neorealism, this should not obscure for us the simultaneous trend in the director's work towards the use of fantasy, the husband's fantastic nightmare in *The Marrying Kind* and Eliza Doolittle's murderous fantasies in "Just You Wait, 'enry 'iggins" being only two examples.²⁰

Interpreting the lack of closure at the end of *A Life of Her Own* as part of a modernist tendency in Cukor's work is not out of keeping with what we know about Cukor's personal tastes: he attended literary salons with Brecht, Isherwood and Mann (142); owned a Braque still life he eventually donated to USC (251); and admired

Rashomon enough to blatantly borrow from it for the musical *Les Girls* (241).

Emanuel Levy observes that the point of *Rashomon* for some is that everyone lies, whereas for Cukor the point of *Les Girls* was that everyone sees reality in her own way: a dramatic or perspectivalist conception of human existence. For Cukor theatricality is not an epistemic matter of humans *knowing* reality accurately or not based on their ability to construct an *imitation* of it but rather a *performative* question of a human relation to the world based on doing, play, involvement and ultimately love.

On this latter view, reality and fantasy are not discontinuous and opposed as orders but rather contiguous surfaces and always double-edged orderings (because facing in two directions) within a spatiotemporal continuum: Lily wakes up not expecting to be watched but nevertheless finds she's "on" before she intended to be, and the man who watches her perform without knowing it is the one she falls in love with and wants to pretend with, even if their love affair will be as temporally circumscribed as any performance and will likewise involve considerable efforts at make-believe on both their parts. It is the real capacity of humans to create and to transform by means of their actions which interests Cukor, even if their efforts come in the end to naught.

Conclusion: Unserious Mastery.

If earlier I posed Katharine Hepburn as opposing Cukor to directors like David Lean in terms of a mastery of the camera which Cukor lacked, this quote does not give a complete picture of Hepburn's analysis of Cukor's talent, for at other times Hepburn contrasted Cukor with directors like Huston and Hitchcock not in terms of talent but in terms of self-seriousness. "John Huston *took himself very seriously*; so did Hitchcock. But I didn't feel Cukor *thought* he was brilliant" (emphasis supplied, 346). That is: Cukor didn't take himself seriously or present himself as needing to be taken seriously. Thus the difference between Cukor and these more 'cinematic' directors has to do not with talent or ability but rather with how these directors want to be taken.

A few of Cukor's other coworkers also observed this lack of seriousness. *Born Yesterday's* production designer Harry Horner emphasized Cukor's light touch: "Other directors I worked for, like William Wyler, were very *serious*, but George was always amusing in his comments" (emphasis supplied, 192). It was the very mixture of "impertinence and gaiety" (103) in Philip Barry's plays, the author's witty treatment of serious material, which appealed to Cukor. Said the director: "If you *really* look at anything, there's always a comic note, and a painful note too. One brings the other to life" (emphasis in the original, 103).

Reality for Cukor—what is 'brought to life' if you "really look at anything"—is precisely emotionally ambivalent, as for Bazin reality is precisely ambiguous, and it is this emotional ambivalence which resists seriousness and which Cukor stages in his theatrical organizations of social and cinematic space-time.

20 Levy recounts numerous examples of Cukor observing behavior in social life to use in his films, but Cukor's concern with psychological realism is difficult to separate from the care with which he observed and manipulated his actors' performances. It is this collapse of Cukor's observational realism and his theatrical care which makes the term "realism" somewhat inadequate at capturing what's happening in Cukor's work—unless one had in mind Gilles Deleuze's conception of neorealism as the crisis of the action-image and the advent of the time-image. On this last point, see Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

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Manufacturing Horror in Hitchcock's *Psycho*

by Steven Schneider

I take pride in the fact that *Psycho*, more than any of my other pictures, is a film that belongs to film-makers. ...the construction of the story and the way in which it was told caused audiences all over the world to react and become emotional (*Hitchcock*: Truffaut 283).

Along with Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (which actually preceded it by a few months), Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) has been hailed as the first "modern" horror film. The reasons given in support of this claim are usually thematic—in *Psycho* (as well as *Peeping Tom*), the "monster" is not some unnatural, unholy creation, as "other" who stands utterly outside our existing conceptual scheme. Rather, the monster here is human, all too human, and besides that, all too real. Not real in the experiential sense, of course (though it should be noted that Norman Bates' character was inspired by the case of Wisconsin serial killer Ed Gein), but in the psychological sense. After *Psycho*, emotionally traumatized and psychosexually motivated monster-murderers began appearing in horror films with alarming regularity. In the words of Robin Wood, "We have been led to accept Norman Bates as a potential extension of ourselves. That we all carry within us somewhere every human potentiality, for good or evil, so that we all share a common guilt, may be intellectually a truism; the greatness of *Psycho* lies in its ability, not merely to tell us this, but to make us experience it" (148).

In *American Horror: 1951 to the Present* (1994), Mark Jancovich argues that the nature of the supposed break between *Psycho* and its cinematic predecessors "should not be overemphasized" (22). With respect to the thematic claim above, Jancovich is surely right—Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), for example, stars Peter Lorre as a psychotic child murderer under compulsion to commit more crimes.¹ At the level of cinematic-narrative discourse, however, the "nature of the break" between *Psycho* and all that came before it (including *Peeping Tom*) has not been emphasized nearly enough. In particular, the three manifest "horror scenes" in *Psycho*—the shower scene, the scene in which Mother kills Arbogast, and the scene in which Lila discovers Mother, only to be confronted by Norman in drag—scenes which do not lose their impact even upon repeated viewing—merit much closer examination as a *set* than they have thus far received. By drawing out and focusing on their subtle similarities rather than their obvious differences (e.g. the shower scene is a rapidly-edited montage; the Arbogast scene makes use of an extended overhead shot; in the Lila scene, nobody gets killed), we can gain insight into Hitchcock's strikingly original technique for inducing horror in viewers. It is this technique, in fact, precursors of which can be found in *Strangers on a Train* (1951) and *Vertigo* (1958), which stands as the *true* breakthrough in cinematic horror. As we shall see, a number of directors (including DePalma, Hooper, and Roeg) have followed Hitchcock in employing it to create their own unforgettable horror sequences.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before turning to the scenes in question, it would benefit us to lay some theoretical groundwork that may be applied, modified, or rejected as we proceed. Hitchcock, in a number of published writings, proposed a cinematic-narrative distinction (more accurately, an opposition) between "suspense" and what he sometimes called "terror," other times simply "surprise." Both are subcategories of cinematic fear; whereas in the former case, "the audience is aware of the menace or danger to the people

it is watching,"² however, in the latter case, the audience is not privy to any such forewarning. With respect to terror, then, the audience—which has been made to identify (or at least sympathize) with the potential victim—shares in the character's shock at the eruption of violence.

In general, Hitchcock treated suspense and terror, if not as mutually exclusive subcategories of cinematic fear, at least as mutually detrimental ones. In his 1949 article, "The Enjoyment of Fear," for example, he writes:

It is obvious . . . that suspense and terror cannot co-exist. To the extent that the audience is aware of the menace or danger to the people it is watching—that is, to the extent that suspense is created, so is its surprise (or terror) at the eventual materialization of the indicated danger diminished (119).

The message here is that suspense and terror cannot exist together (at best they are inversely proportional), because the audience cannot be both forewarned of and surprised by one and the same threat. But is this right? What if the forewarning is not early and/or specific enough to adequately prepare the viewer for what will eventually take place? And what if the eruption of violence proves so disruptive to the film's existing hermeneutic code that it comes as a shock *even though* the viewer has been forewarned?

Hitchcock himself seems to admit of at least this latter possibility. Discussing his film *Sabotage* (1936), in which a small boy wanders around London with what he believes is a can of film under his arm, but which the audience knows contains a time bomb, he writes:

Under this set of circumstances, the lad is protected . . . from premature explosion of the bomb. I blew him up anyway . . . Now that episode . . . was a direct negation of the invisible cloak of protection worn by sympathetic characters in motion pictures. In addition, because the audience knew the film can contain a bomb and the boy did not, *to permit the bomb to explode was a violation of the rule forbidding a direct combination of suspense and terror, or forewarning and surprise* ("The Enjoyment of Fear" 121; emphasis added).

Interestingly, what was originally presented as a law is now referred to as a "rule." Another reason for thinking that suspense and terror are more compatible than Hitchcock tended to admit is the fact that the two states have different "objects," so to speak. Suspense is the emotion felt from the time forewarning is given up until—but not including—the eruption (or dissipation) of violence.³ Terror, on the other hand, is the emotion felt when the eruption actually takes place, and not a moment sooner. So it appears that there is some conceptual space available for the peaceful co-existence of suspense and terror. In *Psycho's* three horror scenes, Hitchcock exploits that space masterfully.

Although Hitchcock uses the terms "terror" and "surprise" interchangeably, it seems appropriate to distinguish between the shock audiences feel when, say, a bomb goes off unexpectedly on a crowded bus, and the shivers they get when a sympathetic character is suddenly confronted by a threatening monster or maniac. In other words, whereas suspense and surprise stand as overlapping subcategories of cinematic fear, within the subcategory of surprise it seems appropriate to distinguish between shock and something more psychologically disturbing—call it "terror."

What then, does it take to engender a terror response in audiences? This has proven a very difficult question to answer satisfactorily; for present purposes, it will suffice to enunciate a couple of possibilities. Noël Carroll, in his 1990 book, *The Philosophy of Horror: or Paradoxes of the Heart*, defines the cross-media emotional response of "art-horror" in terms of fear and disgust. When a sympathetic character is threatened, audiences feel fear. When the

source of that threat violates one (or more) of our pre-existing, culturally-defined norms, audiences react with disgust. So one candidate answer to the question raised above may be stated as follows: audiences respond to a surprise with terror, as opposed to mere shock, when the object of that surprise transgresses cultural categories—when it is disgusting, in Carroll's sense of the term.

An alternative answer cites Freud's 1919 essay, "The 'Uncanny,'" according to which the cause of what we are here calling "terror" is *not* what is alien/foreign/transgressive, but rather "that...which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (337). Following the logic of Freud's argument, the claim is that audiences respond to surprises with terror, as opposed to mere shock, when the object of the surprise in question promotes either a return to consciousness of some previously repressed ideational content (e.g. dismemberment → castration anxiety), or else a reconfirmation of some infantile or primitive belief (e.g. zombies → belief in the ability of the dead to return to life).⁴ Although the Freudian and Carrollian answers are usually understood as being in competition with one another, for present purposes it makes sense to keep both on the table; it may very well be that each is sufficient, and that neither is necessary.

THREE HORROR SCENES IN *PSYCHO*

[1] The shower scene which takes place about one-third of the way through *Psycho* has been subjected to numerous and detailed formal analyses. James Naremore goes so far as to call it "the most horrifying *coup de théâtre* ever filmed" (54). Robin Wood makes almost exactly the same claim: "the shower bath murder [is] probably the most horrific moment in any fiction film" (146). Debates have raged over such questions as whether Janet Leigh played the scene in the nude, exactly how many cuts there are, even whether Hitchcock himself really directed it (Saul Bass, graphic designer and "pictorial consultant" on the film, has taken credit). But one thing is clear—*Psycho's* shower scene merits all the praise that has been lavished on it, as its power to horrify audiences has never been surpassed.

A brief description of the events leading up to Marion's murder will suffice. Having ended her conversation with Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) in the parlor of the Bates Motel, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) decides to return the money she has stolen from her employer back in Phoenix. After watching Norman first spy on Marion as she undresses in the bathroom, then head up home where he takes a seat at the kitchen table, we see Marion write out, then tear up, a note calculating how much of the \$40,000 she has spent. She flushes the scraps of paper down the toilet, disrobes, and steps into the tub. On the significance of Marion's decision to take a shower at this moment, Janet Leigh writes: "The shower was a baptism, a taking away of the torment from her mind. Marion became a virgin again" (Rebello 109).

A series of quick-edited shots of Marion in the shower, taken from a variety of camera angles, follows. Then we see the door open slightly. In walks a shadowy figure, who stops before the curtain. After a beat, the curtain is torn open, high-pitched staccato string music starts blaring, and someone who must be Mother stands facing Marion (whose back is turned) with a long knife cocked and ready to strike. All we can see of Mother is the outline of her hair, which is up in a bun, and the white of her eyes—the

1. Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955), which stars Robert Mitchum as a homicidal preacher, may be cited as another example of "proto-realist" horror.

2. Hitchcock, "The Enjoyment of Fear" (119).

3. Noël Carroll makes the same point in his article, "The Paradox of Suspense": "Suspense is not a response to the outcome; it pertains to the moments leading up to the outcome, when the outcome is certain. Once the outcome is finalized and we are apprised of it, the emotion of suspense gives way to other emotions." (74).

4. Cf. Wood (1986) on the "return of the repressed," and Schneider on the "reconfirmation of the surmounted."

rest of her features are impossible for the audience to make out. Marion spins around, screams in terror, and flails about as Mother stabs her repeatedly (although there is only one brief shot in which the knife can be seen penetrating Marion's skin). Having accomplished her murderous aim, Mother quickly leaves the scene of the crime. Marion slumps down into the tub, pulling the shower curtain down with her. The scene ends with a close-up of Marion's lifeless face, a drop of water which looks like a tear hanging precariously from the corner of one eye.

Much has been made of the fact that somewhere between sixty-five and seventy-eight cuts were used in the construction of the shower scene. Saul Bass, who if nothing else drew up the storyboards for Hitchcock, explains: "the basic point of view of the sequence was based upon a series of repetitive images in which there was a lot of motion but little activity" (Rebello 104). Bass also uses the term "impressionistic" to characterize the scene's quick-cutting, montage technique, a term Hitchcock was fond of as well: "In *Psycho*, there was this very violent impressionistic murder in a bathroom...and it was montaged by little pieces of film giving the impression of a knife stabbing victim" (Gottlieb 146). Without a doubt, much of the scene's effectiveness can be traced to the near overload of visual and auditory sense data Hitchcock forces of the viewer.

But it is the fact that Marion's murder comes as such a *surprise* (in the Hitchcockian sense of the term) that scholars focus on when attempting to explain the horrifying power of the scene. Stylistically-speaking, the whole sequence (with an important exception which we will return to below) is internally focalized through Marion. Which is to say that the audience sees, and so "knows" pretty much what Marion sees and knows.⁵ The point-of-view edited shots from below of the shower nozzle spraying water serve to confirm the connection between Marion's consciousness and our own. As a result of this internal focalization, Marion's terror at the sight of Mother with knife in hand is shared by the audience.

Narratively-speaking, there is just no expecting the occurrence of such a horrific act, given the hermeneutic code thus far established. The audience has been led to ask (though perhaps not consciously) such questions as "Will Marion actually return the money?" and "What will happen to her if she does?"; her death constitutes a rupture in the hermeneutic code, and forces us to reformulate our questions.⁶ All of a sudden, "Why was Marion killed?" and "Who killed her?" demand answers. As Wood puts it, "the meaninglessness of [the murder] from Marion's point of view completely undermines our recently restored sense of security" (146). The fact that Marion gets killed in the shower—a supposedly safe haven where people are at their most exposed and vulnerable—undermines our "sense of security" even more.

What makes the audience (and Marion) react with terror, as opposed to mere shock, at the sight of Mother? Following Carroll, we may say that the figure of Mother here (really Norman in drag) transgresses cultural categories by simultaneously connoting both genders. Although Mother was played by stuntwoman Margo Epper in this scene, not Anthony Perkins, according to *Psycho* costume designer Rita Riggs, "Margo, because of her horsemanship, [was] long and lean and had almost a male set of hips, of all the people possible, she came closest to having Tony's square shoulders and thin hips" (Rebello 113). But there is also something definitely uncanny about Mother, perhaps stemming from the repetitive, machine-like manner in which she stabs at Marion in time with the music. According to Bass:

The basic point of view of the sequence was based upon a series of repetitive images in which there was a lot of motion, but little activity. ...After all, all that happens was simply a woman takes a shower, gets hit, and slowly slides down the tub. Instead, [we filmed] a repetitive series of motions: 'She's taking

a shower, taking a shower, taking a shower. She's hit-hit-hit-hit-hit. She slides-slides-slides. She's hit-hit-hit-hit. She slides-slides-slides-slides.'" (Rebello 104-05).

Freud, who claimed that observed repetition of the same thing often arouses feelings of uncanniness by "forcing upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable when otherwise we should have spoken only of chance" (339), could not have designed the sequence better himself.

In part because of Hitchcock's own opposition between surprise and suspense, in part because it is so obvious that the former (terror, in particular) plays a major role in the shower scene, the role played by the latter in this scene tends to be either ignored, dismissed, or denied. In what follows, I hope to show that this is a critical mistake. At the stylistic level, there is a break in the internal focalization of the scene through Marion, which begins moments before Mother enters the bathroom. Previously, the camera was positioned just inside the shower curtain, facing Marion (who is turned sideways) with the wall behind her. In a subtle and seemingly insignificant cut, the camera takes up position on the other side of Marion, so that now, instead of seeing the wall behind her, we see the semi-translucent shower curtain behind her. As the door opens and Mother begins to enter, Marion gets edged off the right side of the screen. Finally, all we can see is a shadowy figure through the curtain; we are in the shower with Marion, but Marion is completely out of the frame. The significance of this shot—which lasts for only a couple of seconds—cannot be overemphasized. Although we still identify with Marion, and feel her terror after Mother opens the curtain, the audience experiences in addition a brief but incredibly powerful period of suspense, in which we are given forewarning that something very unpleasant (we don't know exactly what) is about to take place.⁷

It is very interesting to note that Robert Bloch, author of *Psycho* (1959), the novel upon which Hitchcock's film is based, wrote what amounts to an analogous shift out of internal focalization through Marion in his *own* shower scene:

...she stepped into the shower stall. The water was hot, and she had to add a mixture from the COLD faucet. Finally she turned both faucets on full force and let the warmth gush over her. / That's why she didn't hear the door open, or note the sound of footsteps. And at first, when the shower curtains parted, the steam obscured the face. / Then she *did* see it there—just a face, peering through the curtains, hanging in midair like a mask. A head-scarf concealed the hair and the glassy eyes stared inhumanly, but it wasn't a mask, it couldn't be. The skin had been powdered dead-white and two hectic spots of the rouge centered on the cheekbones. It wasn't a mask. It was the face of a crazy old woman. / Mary started to scream, and then the curtains parted further and a hand appeared holding a butcher's knife. It was the knife that, a moment later, cut off her scream. / And her head (50-51: emphasis added).

Just as the viewer of *Psycho* sees Mother enter the bathroom before Marion does, the reader of *Psycho* visualizes Mother's entrance before Marion knows what is happening. In both film and novel, then, suspense precedes—but does not spoil—Mother's big surprise.

[2] Something very similar occurs in the next (and last) murder scene. Insurance company detective Arbogast (Martin Balsam) has been dispatched to find Marion and, more importantly, the \$40,000 she is suspected of having stolen. After the abrupt end to his initial conversation with Norman at the motel, he decides to return later in the evening and interview Mrs. Bates—a huge mistake, as it turns out. Arbogast walks up to the Bates' house, enters on his own and pauses to survey the situation. The whole scene is

heavily internally focalized through Arbogast; point-of-view edited shots show us his view of the hallway, the kitchen, and the long stairway to Mother's room. The camera briefly shows us his feet going up the steps, then focuses on his face, rising with him as he climbs the stairs. Then come two significant shifts out of internal focalization. First, we cut to a shot of Mother's door (her room is on Arbogast's left—screen right—at the top of the stairs) opening slightly and silently, so that Arbogast neither sees nor hears it. After a quick cut back to Arbogast, the camera takes up position at a point high above the proceedings; just as the detective reaches the top step, we see Mother rush out of her room, knife in hand, and slash him across the face before he even knows what is happening. A reaction shot in close-up of Arbogast's stunned expression is followed by another focus on his feet as he falls backwards down the stairs.

That Hitchcock wanted his audience to sympathize with Arbogast, who, up until this point in the film has come across as rather arrogant and unlikable, is made clear in his interview with François Truffaut:

One day during shooting I came down with a temperature, and since I couldn't come to the studio, I told the cameraman and my assistant that they could use Saul Bass' drawings. Only the part showing him going up the stairs before the killing. There was a shot of his hand on the rail, and of feet seen in profile, going up through the bars of the balustrade. When I looked at the rushes of the scene, I found it was no good, and that was an interesting revelation for me, because as the sequence was cut, it wasn't an innocent person but a sinister man who was going up those stairs. Those cuts would have been perfectly all right if they were showing a killer, but they were in conflict with the spirit of the scene (273).

It is precisely *because* we are led to empathize with Arbogast, to view him as an "innocent person," and moreover, as one who has unknowingly put himself in an extremely vulnerable position (like Marion), that Mother's vicious attack comes as such a surprise.

And "surprise" is definitely the operative word here. Bass would later recall Hitchcock's criticism of his storyboards for this scene: "'No' [Hitchcock told me]. 'Wrong point of view. You are telling the audience something might or will happen. He should be going up just like nothing's going to happen'" (Rebello 124). And Naremore writes of the "surprise and shock which explode upon Arbogast...mirrored in the dreamy image of him falling backward down the stair, his arm flailing for balance, his eyes wide with fear and confusion" (64). Naremore should have written "surprise and

5. The audience "knows" what Marion knows according to the internal hermeneutic of the film; whether particular viewers have already seen the film, or have heard what happens, is beside the point.

6. Besides the fact that, until the moment of her death, Marion is the film's protagonist (the amount of internal focalization she receives confirms this point), Janet Leigh was a major star at the time, and having her killed off a third of the way through was a huge risk. In his interview with Truffaut, Hitchcock stated, "I purposely killed the star so as to make the killing even more unexpected" (260).

7. For those who have already seen the film, or have heard about the shower scene, it might be better to speak of *dread*, rather than suspense. Cf. Naremore: "subsequent viewing fills us with an uneasy anticipation, a malaise that begins from the moment Janet Leigh steps into the shower" (55).

8. As opposed to the shower scene, Mother does *not* come across as disgusting here in the sense of transgressing established gender codes. Mother was played by a little person named Mitzi in this scene, and according to Anthony Perkins, "the reason she was hired was that Hitch was particularly worried that the audience was going to see through the whole thing. ...[I]n order to strengthen the illusion, he engaged a woman who was very small, and, physically, totally unlike anyone else [who appeared as Mother] in the picture" (Rebello 125).

Norman (Anthony Perkins) invites Marion (Janet Leigh) to supper in the parlour.



terror." Mother's quick, purposive movements—she practically glides along the floor, and down the staircase—are disgusting, insofar as they violate our culturally-enacted distinction between woman and machine.⁸

But Mother's automaton-like behaviour is not merely disgusting—it is uncanny, and for the same reason as in the shower scene. Mother does not stop after slashing Arbogast across the face; she runs down the stairs after him, positions herself astride his motionless body, and begins stabbing violently. The final shot of the sequence is actually that of the space *above* Mother's head. Into that space intrudes the ridiculously long knife in Mother's hand, as it gets raised in the air again and again. The effect of this shot, which is accompanied by Mother's *idée fixe* on the soundtrack, is once again to recall the primitive compulsion to repeat.

Hitchcock is reported to have instructed Bass: "[Arbogast] should be going up just like nothing's going to happen. You know you don't get killed just for walking up the stairs. Rather, he sees a door and says, 'Oh, I wonder what's in here.' He reaches it and *all hell breaks loose!*" (Rebello 124). The interesting thing about this quotation (unless Bass remembered it wrong) is that it constitutes a *misdescription* of the scene in question. Arbogast does not get the chance to see the door to Mother's room, much less to ask who or what is behind it. *But we do*. Just as in the shower scene, the brief shifting out of internal focalization through the victim serves to create suspense for the audience, even while the terror remains.

As noted above, the shift from internal focalization here actually consists of two distinct shots. First is the shot of Mother's door opening slightly, unbeknownst to Arbogast. Second is the extreme overhead shot of Mother rushing out to meet the detective from the screen right. Hitchcock had this to say about his choice of the latter:

I deliberately placed the camera very high for two reasons. The first was so that I could shoot down on top of the mother, because if I'd shown her back, it might have looked as if I was deliberately concealing her face and the audience would have been leery. ... But the main reason was to get the contrast between the long shot and the close-up of the big head as the knife came down at him (Truffaut 273,76).

Naremore further contends that the high angle shot "gives us the feeling that we are looking down into an abyss; thus creating a moment which is highly typical of Hitchcock's films" (64). The claim here is that, in addition to the reasons just cited, Hitchcock's use of an extreme overhead shot in this scene serves to give the audience brief but crucial forewarning regarding Mother's impending (perhaps inevitable) attack. Arbogast may be surprised and terrified; we feel the anxiety of suspense, as well.

A modicum of suspense also occurs at the narrative level in this scene. After Marion's death, even first-time viewers are prepared for the spectacle of violent murder, though they might be uncertain as to exactly when—or how—it will take place. Hitchcock was well aware of these expectations: "The showing of a violent murder at the beginning," he told V.F. Perkins, "was intended purely to instill into the minds of the audience a certain degree of fear of what is to come" (Rebello 123). Hitchcock's desire to surprise viewers, despite their "degree of fear of what is to come," may be what led him to regard the murder of Arbogast as more crucial to the picture, and more technically challenging, than the shower scene.⁹ Truffaut quotes him as saying: "All the elements that would convey suspense to the detective's journey upstairs had gone before and we therefore needed a simple statement" (273). So here again, we find the director problematizing his *own* frequently stated opposition between surprise and suspense.

[3] Finally, we come to the Lila discovery scene. Lila Crane (Vera Miles) has sneaked over to the Bates home hoping to find a clue to

her sister's mysterious disappearance. She sees Norman run in looking for her, and hides downstairs. The internal focalization through Lila in this scene is intense, and a point-of-view edited shot shows us the full cellar door through her eyes. She enters the cellar, only to stop when she sees something in front of her. Cut to a p.o.v. edited shot of Mother sitting in a chair facing the far wall, her face hidden from view. Here is *Psycho* screenwriter Joseph Stefano's description of what comes next: "Lila goes to the chair, touches it. The touch disturbs the figure. It starts to turn, slowly, stiffly, a clock-wise movement...It is the body of a woman long dead...The movement of this stuffed, ill-preserved cadaver, turning as if in response to Lila's call, is actually graceful, ballet-like, and the effect is terrible and obscene" (Rebello 128). Cut to a reaction shot of Lila. She screams and knocks the light bulb hanging behind her, then turns abruptly to the fruit cellar door. Cue the staccato violin music once more. For a brief moment, we see an empty doorway. Then Norman enters the frame, in full drag, knife in hand, grinning maniacally. A shot of Lila's horrified reaction is followed by one of Norman starting towards her, only to be tackled from behind by Marion's lover, Sam Loomis (John Gavin).

There is much to be said about this scene, which has received inadequate attention in the *Psycho* literature, especially in comparison with the ones above. The double surprise (of Mother's corpse, of Norman in drag) is extremely effective, stylistically—and narratively—speaking. To ease exposition, we can break things down as follows:

SURPRISE

| | <i>Stylistic level</i> | <i>Narrative level</i> |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Mother's corpse | Mother's back is turned to us; as the chair swivels around, her head takes up more and more of the frame. At the last second, it lurches forward as if it were alive. ¹⁰ | Like most first-time viewers, Lila knows that something is wrong, but she doesn't know what. No way does she expect what she finds, which is why she first asks "Mrs. Bates?", then taps her on the shoulder. |
| Norman in drag | We get a shot of an empty doorway; then, all of a sudden, into the frame bursts Norman. Point-of-view edited shots internalized through Lila induce us to share her surprise. | Neither Lila nor the audience have time to fully digest the sight of Mother before seeing Norman in drag, which immediately answers some (though not all) of the major hermeneutic questions of the film. |

The disclosure of Mother's corpse is terrifying, not merely shocking, in large part because Hitchcock animated it by (i) having it lurch forward at the last second, and (ii) having the hanging light bulb illuminate the shriveled up, grinning skull-face. With respect to (i), assistant director Hilton Green explained that "Hitchcock wanted the dummy to turn a certain way as Vera put her hand on it. We did it with a camera mount. There was a prop man underneath turning the cranks as a camera operator would do. It took a while before we got it exactly the way Hitchcock was after" (Rebello 128-29). With respect to (ii), Bass has commented that "the swinging light caused the light to change on the face and gave it a sort of macabre animation that almost made the face look like it was doing something—laughing, screaming, whatever—when you knew it was dead" (Rebello 128). Carroll cites the reanimation of dead matter as a prime cause of disgust, since it constitutes a transgression of our conceptual boundary between life and death. According to Freud, meanwhile, "primitive fear of the dead still remains strong within us, and is always ready to come to the surface of any provocation" (338).

Norman's own disclosure is equally terrifying, albeit for different reasons. Obviously, the sight of this tall, threatening man wear-

ing an ill-fitting wig and dress, with his pants sticking out from the bottom, signifies major gender confusion. The restrictive movie production codes of the time would have prevented any overt reference to queer sexuality, but the overtones are definitely there. Why is Norman grinning like that? His dramatic entrance, which Hitchcock plays for full effect—Norman practically *jumps* into the doorway/frame and pauses there for a beat before entering—may be read as a rebellious reaction to his having been “outed” by Lila, who has just discovered his terrible secret/perversion. Though Naremore fails to explicitly address the homosexual subtext of Norman’s interaction with Sam here, his description of the sequence speaks for itself: “the pain on Norman’s face is completely out of proportion to his physical suffering. His eyes squint and his mouth contorts wildly. His back arches and his fingers claw at the air as he sinks to the floor, his dress ripping apart and his wig falling off. He seems to disintegrate before our eyes” (68). Is Norman being subdued by Sam, or is he having a violent orgasm (or both)? It is interesting to note that in the Gus Van Sant remake of *Psycho* (1998), the homoerotic charge of Sam’s “manhandling” of Norman is played for full effect.¹¹

In addition to the double surprise of this scene, there is also a great deal of suspense. Naremore puts the point succinctly: “In rapid succession, [Hitchcock] piles suspense upon shock upon shock” (67). As opposed to *Psycho*’s previous horror scenes, the suspense does not really occur at the stylistic level, whereby the audience gets a brief bit of cinematographic forewarning due to a shift out of internal focalization.¹² But stylistic suspense is not necessary here; we are so anxious by this point that, even though the internal hermeneutics of the film cannot adequately prepare us for what Lila discovers, “the audience is frantic with expectation” (Naremore 67). As in the Arbogast murder scene, we may not know what will happen, but we are pretty sure that whatever it is, it will be terrifying.

CONCLUSION

Taking the three horror scenes in *Psycho* as a set, then, here is what we find. (1) Surprise is always preceded, but never ruined, by suspense. (2) The reason it is not ruined is because the forewarning we get is too brief and unspecific to adequately prepare us for the violent spectacle that follows. In addition, this spectacle proves so disruptive to the film’s existing hermeneutic code that no amount of forewarning could negate its effect. (3) The particular kind of surprise felt by the victim and audience is *terror* (in the Carrollian and/or Freudian sense), as opposed to mere shock. (4) One rule for suspense seems to be: the more narrative suspense there is (i.e. the greater the audience’s expectation of violent spectacle), the less stylistic suspense via a shift out of internal focalization through the potential victim is necessary. (5) But for maximum effect, suspense of *some* kind is required, in addition to the surprise(s). Ironically, Hitchcock’s highly original technique for inducing horror in audiences contradicts his own professed view on the subject. At the very least, this tells us that the man was a much better director than theoretician.

Why should the cinematic-narrative admixture of surprise and suspense prove so effective? Perhaps because, if done properly, it combines the best of both worlds. On the one hand, there is an exploitation of audience expectations—what Robert Baird calls the “fearful anticipation of the unknown” (2)—and on the other hand, a disclosure so terrifying as to defy those expectations. Although it is often said that imagined evils are far more horrific than real ones, the “real” evils of *Psycho* are worse than could ever be imagined.

Later directors have confirmed the utility of Hitchcock’s technique, by employing it to construct their own unforgettable horror sequences. Instructive comparisons could be made between, e.g., the shower scene and the elevator attack scene of Brian DePalma’s *Dressed to Kill* (1980), the Arbogast murder scene and Leatherface’s

first appearance in Tobe Hooper’s *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), the Lila discovery scene and the chilling climax of Nicholas Roeg’s *Don’t Look Now* (1973). In his interview with Truffaut, Hitchcock acknowledged feeling “tremendously satisfie[d]...to be able to use the cinematic art to achieve something of a mass emotion. And with *Psycho* we most definitely achieved this” (282). That Hitchcock and his team achieved “something of a mass emotion” with *Psycho* is indisputable, even if he was a little confused as to just *how* this mass emotion was achieved.

9. It did not help that, as Bloch conceived the scene in *Psycho*, the dominant internal focalization is through Norman rather than Arbogast:

...all at once she came gliding out, wearing the nice dress with the ruffles. Her face was freshly powdered and rouged, she was pretty as a picture, and she smiled as she started down the stairs. / Before she was halfway down, the knocking came. / It was happening. Mr. Arbogast was here; he [Norman] wanted to call out and warn him, but something was stuck in his throat. He could only listen as Mother cried gaily, “I’m coming! I’m coming! Just a moment, now!” / And it was just a moment. / Mother opened the door and Mr. Arbogast walked in. He looked at her and then he opened his mouth to say something. As he did so he raised his head, and that was all Mother had been waiting for. Her arm went out and something bright and glittering flashed back and forth, back and forth— / It hurt Norman’s eyes and he didn’t want to look. He didn’t have to look, either, because he already knew. / Mother had found his razor.... (135-36).

Nevertheless, the reader still gets plenty of suspense (“he wanted to call out and warn him, but something was stuck in his throat”) and a chilling surprise at the end (Mother had found his razor...).

10. This sequence does not appear in Bloch’s book: “Lila opened the door of the fruit cellar. / It was then that she screamed. / She screamed when she saw the old woman lying there, the gaunt, gray-haired old woman whose brown, wrinkled face grinned up at her in an obscene greeting” (207-08).

11. It should also be noted that there is an uncanny doubling effect in this sequence between Norman (as Sam takes him down) and Mother. Norman’s eyes are squeezed tightly shut, corresponding to Mother’s empty eye sockets, and both of their mouths are wide open. The cut from Norman to Mother at the end of the scene reinforces the doubling motif, which is finally confirmed by the superimposition of Mother’s face on that of Norman’s at the end of the following scene at the police station. Freud identifies the unexplained appearance of a double as a primary source of uncanniness.

12. This is arguable. When Mother’s chair swivels around, the camera angle seems to give us a shot of Mother’s face before Lila sees it. Also, the staccato violin music begins prior to Norman’s appearance in the doorway. In any event, whatever forewarning we may get here, it is most likely too brief to qualify as “suspense,” properly understood.

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Illusion and Deception in Cukor's *Justine*

by Randall Clark

Justine never should have been a George Cukor film. It is difficult enough to imagine the meticulous craftsman of the studio system working in *avant garde* 1969 at all; how could the auteur of *Camille* and *Holiday* function in the year of *Easy Rider* and *The Wild Bunch*? It is even more difficult to imagine Cukor's adapting Lawrence Durrell's postmodern *Alexandria Quartet* to the screen. Despite Stanley Kauffmann's observation that "the Durrell work is much involved with femininity, explicit or atmospheric; Cukor, rightly or wrongly, has the name of being a 'woman's director,'" there is in fact very little in Cukor's oeuvre to suggest that he and Durrell would be compatible.

Cukor, in fact, was not the first choice of producer Pandro Berman to direct the film. Originally the assignment was given to Joseph Strick, the former documentary maker who had earlier made fairly successful motion pictures from such difficult works as Genet's *The Balcony* and Joyce's *Ulysses*. But Strick was fired from the film only after a few weeks of shooting. Michael York, who portrayed Darley, one of the novels' narrators and the film's only one, described Strick's removal as follows: "Although Strick's unorthodox, eccentric methods antagonized the old guard filmmakers, they seemed to suit the impressionist nature of the story. He let us develop our characters in an intuitive, unforced way....In the middle of our first rehearsal Joe Strick was called away to the phone. He returned smiling strangely to announce that he had been fired. Working away from the studio's immediate influence, Strick had obviously rubbed up against the Hollywood grain. Now, with all the interiors left to shoot, there were rumors that the film would be abandoned....A rumor began to circulate that our film was to be taken over by the veteran director George Cukor. Optimism flooded in like a returning tide. He was one of the undisputed masters of his craft....He was also known as a woman's director, which augured well for our wayward *Justine*."² Cukor had been replaced as a director before, most famously on *Gone with the Wind* but also on *Desire Me* and *One Hour with You*, but only one other time had he replaced a director, Charles Vidor on *Song Without End*, and that was without screen credit. However, he was to be the sole credited director on *Justine*, and this was to be his first credit since winning the Oscar for *My Fair Lady*; it was an important assignment.

Cukor immediately attempted to make the film more faithful to Durrell's novels.³ Few seem to feel as if he succeeded. Writing in



the *New Yorker*, Penelope Gilliatt complained that "the film—taking on a task outside Hollywood's range by miles—gives up the interesting problem of finding technical equivalents for Durrell's experiments with time and focus, and instead tells a plot."⁴ *Atlantic* magazine critic Dan Wakefield was harsher, stating that "Certainly a movie couldn't strictly follow the complex structure of the *Quartet*, but one might have been attempted with its complexities in mind, its method of turning in on itself and looking backward and forward in the lives of the characters, whose motives and behaviors are the real story anyway. But the movie *Justine* hacked out a simple, linear plot line from the four books, tossed most of the characters in, and set them shuttling obediently from beginning to middle to neatly wrapped end."⁵ Even Cukor himself was dissatisfied with the film; when an interviewer in 1972 suggested "In taking over the picture, you obviously went first for atmosphere, and I'm sure you were right. The script doesn't make sense, it seems to have no idea of what kind of approach to take and how much of the Lawrence Durrell novels to use," Cukor responded, "I took the picture on because I hadn't worked in some time, various projects had fallen through, and it was a professional challenge. I thought, 'Yes, I can do this'—but had I known the full horror of some things...."⁶

The truth is that no one could have made a faithful adaptation

Justine: Mirrors suggest the ambiguity of their relationship—Justine (Anouk Aimée) and Darley (Michael York).

given me a nudge!" while the conclusion of *Justine* proper is "So that...." Darley has a different ending for his book from Durrell's, and for a very good reason. Cukor is reminding us that this is a narrative, presented from one person's point of view, three years after the fact; furthermore, while the *Quartet* used multiple narrators *Justine* employs only one and it is significant that Darley is the one who is retained. He is an aspiring writer; he supports himself by teaching. The dichotomy of Darley's vocation and his avocation—one exists to repeat facts and information, the other to make things up—also reinforces Durrell's major themes. Cukor fills the film with references to Darley's interest in poetry, which is even more fanciful than fiction, probably more subject to interpretation, and more elusive in its meaning. In one scene Justine's husband

Nessim shows Darley his observatory then says, "The observatory is my pride and joy. Are you interested in astronomy. No, I forgot. Poetry." Another dichotomy is established in this scene, one between verifiable science and fanciful literature. Furthermore, Darley is not the only character who creates fictions (as opposed to lying); Pursewarden, the cynical British expatriate, tells him at one point that "Justine is a great storyteller."

Darley refers to his memories in *Justine*'s opening scene; memories are faulty and if reminding us of that fact is not quite as strong an indicator of relativity and subjectivity as is Durrell's use of multiple viewpoints, it is an effective device all the same. Where individual perceptions are unreliable, the truth is impossible to determine; Darley's subsequent narration frequently serves to reinforce the concept of illusion. "From the moment I met Justine in

of Durrell's work and even a loose adaptation was problematic. After all, Durrell had claimed that the narrative structure of the *Quartet* was based on Einstein's theory of relativity; he attempted to provide subjective, rather than objective, views of his many characters; and it is his stated intention that the four novels be read simultaneously. Given the additional problem of censorship presented by subplots involving child prostitutes and Justine's lesbian affair, it is not surprising that the completed film strays from its source material. Underage prostitutes could be portrayed by midgets and Clea, Justine's lesbian lover, could simply be excised from the film, but how does a director capture the sheer indeterminate nature of the novels? Cukor did this—at least as well as he could—by drawing upon one of the strengths of the film medium, and Durrell's multiple narrators became one unreliable narrator, whose subjective recounting of events was reinforced with Cukor's carefully chosen symbolic visuals. (Fortunately, it is easy to watch the film and discern what is Cukor's and what is Strick's; Strick had done all the exterior filming but very little else before being removed; most of the interiors and all the post-production work was supervised by Cukor.)

"The end of my book says 'Completed October 1936,'" says Darley in the film's opening line, a narrative voice over. In fact the last line of the *Quartet* is "And I felt as if the whole universe had

1 Stanley Kauffmann, "Justine", *The New Republic*, August 23-30, 1969, p. 24.

2 Michael York, *Accidentally on Purpose*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1991, p. 187-190.

3 Ibid.

4 Penelope Gilliatt, "Justine", *New Yorker*, August 9, 1969, p. 68.

5 Dan Wakefield, "New Styles of Storytelling", *Atlantic*, November 1969, p. 172.

6 Gavin Lambert, *On Cukor*, New York, Putnam, 1972, p. 251.

Cohen's hospital room nothing had seemed real," he concedes at one point; if even Darley realizes that his observations might be pure fancy then how can the audience give them any credibility. His confusion is exacerbated by the mysterious nature of nearly everyone he meets in Alexandria, including the incestuous Percy Pursewarden, the gunrunner Nessim Hosnani, and the bragging criminal Cohen. Justine herself is the most ambiguous of all the characters; Cukor establishes this in what is probably the movie's most famous scene, which has Justine reflected in three mirrors side by side. Not only are we not given a view of the real Justine, even the image we are presented of her is multi-faced. Indeed, as Darley observes, "Only Melissa was exactly as she seemed to be," itself a somewhat naïve and not entirely accurate assessment of a prostitute. Pursewarden is probably more accurate in his assessment that "It's as if there was absolutely nothing she didn't understand while understanding absolutely nothing," and Justine is certainly close to the truth when she says, "Everybody in Alexandria is dangerous." Both statements relate to Cukor's central theme.

Inaccurate though it may be, Darley's view of Melissa is important because in the film she is the center of the group; most of the characters know each other, but they all know Melissa and intersect through her; it is vital, therefore, that if there is one character who is without disguise, it would be she. Melissa at least intends to be honest; it is her expressed philosophy that "People should know the truth about people," though that appears to be unusually difficult in Alexandria. Cukor visually reinforces Melissa's role each time he has her onscreen with other major characters. For instance, in an early scene focusing on Melissa, Darley, and Cohen, Cukor places Darley and Cohen uncomfortably close together in a cramped stairwell; the two men have little in common other than their relationship with Melissa and Cukor's extremely confining shot allows audiences to witness their uneasiness. Significantly, it is when Darley later visits the dying Cohen in the hospital, largely on Melissa's behalf, that he meets Justine, a key relationship brought about only because of Melissa. The meeting of Darley and Melissa is itself highly significant and symbolic. She has been belly dancing in a club and a sailor has slipped Spanish fly into her drink. Hysterical, she screams and runs out of the bar into the street, where she is tormented by a group of children. Cukor then cuts to a scene of Darley lying in bed and reading. This is the first of several shots in which a character will be shown lying in bed while performing some cerebral task; Cukor takes both the sexual and the leisure connotations of the bedroom and associates them with the intellect, conveying visually the same sense of boredom and self-indulgence that Durrell wrote about. Darley is dressed in striped pajamas and wearing black horn-rimmed glasses; the combined effect is to make him look brainy but somewhat unsophisticated, youthful, naïve, and definitely out of place in Alexandria. But Darley then hears Melissa's screams and goes out to help her, putting a coat on over his pajamas. The coat alters his appearance sufficiently to change his image from naïveté to confidence. With this scene, Cukor conveys two of the main points of Durrell's quartet: appearances can be illusory and in Alexandria anything can change very quickly. Nothing is permanent and nothing should be relied upon.

Missella returns to Darley's home a day or so later, holding a bouquet in her hands and wearing a flowered dress. Cukor's symbolism is obvious: Melissa is to be associated with flowers, which are beautiful and colorful, but not with living flowers. The flowers in the bouquet and on the dress are like Melissa herself, colorful but confined and dead inside. Cukor then employs a montage sequence; we are shown a series of photographs of Melissa and Darley together; these images are presented to the viewers as pictures Melissa mounts on a blackboard. Because he is a writer, Durrell frequently conveys information to his audience by having his characters read long passages from books; here Cukor is employing the equivalent technique for a film director. In both

cases, the information given is highly subjective; the camera does not lie, but it can withhold and Melissa has clearly chosen—and because Cukor shows only her hand mounting the photos, we know she has chosen, not Darley—pictures that will represent the past the way she wants to remember it. Following the montage, Cukor shows Melissa writing the word "mine" in Greek on Darley's forehead. Though she has done this with her lipstick, she tells him she has "branded" him with "a special dye that never comes off." He responds by drawing a heart, pierced by an arrow, on her stomach. The scene again addresses the themes of illusion and change. Branding should last forever, but this will not; it is not a special dye but merely lipstick; Darley does not truly belong to Melissa, and though he may believe he is in love with her, that is not really true.

A scene in a barber shop follows. The barber shop is important in the *Quartet* and while seen only briefly in *Justine*, retains its symbolic value. This is, after all, a place where individuals come to change their appearance, alter the image they present to others. It is also the other central point of the film in that, apart from Melissa, it is what brings the male characters together. The barber, Mnemjian, is a midget, which adds to the surrealistic air that Cukor was striving for. Mnemjian worries about a stock market crash, not so much for financial reasons as because he fears the chaos and revolution that would inevitably follow. Nessim advises him to buy diamonds when the market is unstable. More dichotomies are established here; diamonds, which are hard and solid, are contrasted with the mercurial stock market while the creative and imaginative barber is contrasted with the emotionless gunrunner.

Eventually Justine and Darley meet in Cohen's hospital room. Darley says that nothing seemed real after this, and that is the film's demarcation point as well; after that particular scene the themes of change and illusion become even more prominent. One scene, though directed by Strick, is still worth discussing because Cukor takes the concepts from it and builds upon them later on. Darley visits Justine and her husband at their home; he and she take a horseback ride to the beach. Cukor has dressed Anouk Aimee, who portrays Justine, entirely in red, which symbolizes her passion. (In many other scenes, Justine is dressed in virginal white; the contrast is ironic and effective.) Darley has his regular clothes on, so Justine gives him a black cloak to cover them. Black, of course, symbolizes death, so we have her passion in conflict with his doom. This is also the second time we have seen Darley change his appearance—and his image—by placing one garment over another. She strips naked, shedding her outer image, and goes into the water. She is still holding the horse's reins when she goes in; holding the reins and removing the red garment indicate she can control wild things when she must. In the next scene Darley's hair is wet, so we must conclude that he too went into the water but the film never shows his doing that—the audience cannot be allowed to witness Darley behaving in such a reckless and carefree manner, although we may infer that he is capable of it. Justine kisses him and says, "Saltwater. Chalk." These are both organic substances that can be found on certain shores, but the reference to tasting chalk is clearly an allusion to Darley's occupation as a teacher and contrasts with the less artificial saltwater. When Darley kisses Justine back she stops him; when they return to the Hosnani home he finds that her husband has spied upon them with a telescope. A bloody broken glass lies nearby. Red still symbolizes passion, but this is passion borne of anger, not lust. The fact that Nessim observed his wife's dalliance with Darley not face to face, but with his telescope, further adds to the concept of perception and illusion; after all, he only knows what he saw, not what happened. Furthermore, infidelity itself is presented in this film as the ultimate state of mutability.

The themes explored in the beach scene are even more fully developed in a subsequent scene at a costume party; given Cukor's focus on appearance and illusion, this is probably the most sym-

bolically charged passage in the film. Costumes easily allow the wearers to change or hide their identity, although they can also sometimes be penetrated easily: "Peekaboo, we know you," Cukor has Pursewarden say later in the film. Nessim has ordered six weeks of constant celebration, causing Darley to recognize another ambiguity and wonder "What exactly are we celebrating?" The celebration culminates in the costume party; Cukor shows virtually everyone in the room putting on a mask; Nessim and his brother, Narouz, are the last to don theirs. Justine is dressed all in red again, including a red mask. Her passions are engaged again and she flirts openly with Pursewarden, who has come to the party with his sister. Pursewarden recognizes the importance of attire in creating an image and comments on this to Mountolive, the British diplomat, who replies that "Somebody told me that the Egyptians are always very impressed" by a uniform. Pursewarden also makes the telling remark that Darley is Justine's "shadow;" he means that Darley follows her everywhere, but the term shadow in this instance also shows that Darley has no substance on his own and perhaps even is to be taken in the Jungian sense, as if he represents Justine's dark side. Ironically, Pursewarden, his sister Liza, and Mountolive are engaged in a bit of deception themselves; Liza, who is pregnant, is secretly engaged to Mountolive, but it is her own brother who is the father.

Cukor films the party in a deliberately disorienting manner, with rapid movements by the performers, quick cuts, and constant camera movement that gives the audience the overwhelming impression of swirling. This adds to the sense of emotions going out of control—the characters, literally wearing masks, are freed to let their true selves show a bit more. One of the male guests, Toto, is wearing a costume almost identical to Justine's and has even borrowed her ring. Later Nessim admits that Justine gave Toto the ring not to aid him in impersonating her but "so she could be anonymous."; jewelry, like clothing, helps determine identity. Passing himself off as Justine, Toto kisses her brother-in-law, Narouz. In a fit of rage, Narouz kills Toto, not because he is offended by a homosexual pass but because he despises Justine and sees this as another act of infidelity. Blood is again used to symbolize passion and anger; the dead man is left on a couch, where he passes for an unconscious party guest until a female guest dressed in silver finds spots of red on her costume.

Narouz's crime and his other outbursts threaten to destroy the facade established by Nessim and Justine. Both Narouz and Nessim are Coptic Christians in a Muslim country, though Nessim is willing to ignore his faith to get along in society—religion, too, can be part of a disguise—but Narouz is less flexible and more confrontational than his brother. Justine and Nessim assess their situation in a scene that Cukor composes beautifully: They are playing chess. She is lounging against a bed, he is seated. The chessboard between them offers a sense of symmetry, as do their matching champagne glasses, but Cukor has used a delicate touch to make the remainder of the frame just slightly asymmetric. A lamp is slightly to the right of center, closer to Justine than Nessim. The backgrounds behind them are also different enough—bedstead for her, curtain for him—to give the shot an almost split screen effect. The clever, chess-playing couple are living in a world that is out of balance and in which one is slightly stronger than the other. That they are playing games at all during a crisis is revelatory of their characters; the concept recurs near the film's end, when Cukor shows Justine, dressed in gold to symbolize wealth, leaning against pillows and playing cards.

Narouz's rebelliousness culminates in a meeting at his church. Cukor has Robert Forster, who played Narouz, costumed differently from all the other performers in this scene to force him to stand out; Forster is wearing blue work clothes while everyone else is dressed in black and gray suits and dresses. At the meeting Nessim and others advise against fighting the Muslims, who are becoming increasingly threatening to the Christians. It is their intention to

compromise with the Muslims and convince them the Copts are not a threat to them; in other words, they wish to disguise their true nature. Narouz encourages rebellion against the Muslims and Nessim reprimands him for speaking out at an open meeting; in a society predicated upon illusion and deceit, an open meeting is the last place where one can speak openly. Nessim finally bribes a public official, Memlik Pasha, to get Narouz out of the country; the bribe consists of cash placed between the pages of a copy of the *Koran*, which indicts Alexandria's religious hypocrisy while providing yet another example of something that is not what it appears to be. The latter concept recurs shortly thereafter when Nessim admits he has been shipping guns to Palestine in crates marked "sewing machines." Minister Pasha recognizes the relativity of his culture when he refuses to meet with Nessim on Tuesday, explaining, "On Monday Allah created the trees. On Tuesday we hang our criminals from their branches." Nessim's efforts fail, however, and Narouz is shot and killed, presumably by a Muslim, although only the assassin's hands are shown. As staged by Cukor, Narouz's funeral scene provides a highly visual representation of several abstract concepts. As the ceremony takes place in the foreground, a crowd of mourners dressed in black destroys the furnishings of the Hosnani household. Cukor again uses quick cuts and camera movement to suggest a crowd out of control, though this is a much more destructive group than the guests at the costume party. The extreme destruction, incongruous to viewers, symbolizes many things. It first demonstrates the culture clashes that exist at the heart of Alexandria; the mourners' display of violence, rather than the solemnity one normally expects at such an occasion, clearly displays the differences between Egyptian society and the British presence. The mourners' actions are also a good example of Durrell's relativism, since their behavior would be inappropriate in most other times and places but seems natural to them here. Obviously Cukor is using the scene to parallel the conflict between Muslim and Coptic Christian. Finally, he has used the disorder to emphasize the chaotic state of all of his characters, most of whom are dealing with some crisis.

By the film's end, in fact, almost everyone's life is in disarray. Narouz is dead and Pursewarden dies soon after. Melissa is seriously ill. Darley has been rejected by Melissa and has learned the full nature of Justine's duplicity, which has dealt him a severe emotional blow. Cukor places his focus, though, on Justine and Nessim. The couple are under house arrest because they are suspected of selling guns illegally in Alexandria; Nessim explains that it will be difficult for them to clear themselves since he was in fact secretly shipping guns to Palestine. In the meantime, they have negotiated for partial freedom by having Justine sleep with Minister Pasha. Both Nessim and Justine have become prisoners of their own natures, and as Cukor ends the film, pulling back the camera to reveal the two in their lavish home, the audience realizes that they are trapped by their wealth also. But the Hosnanis are not the only prisoners at the film's end. When Pasha leaves after making love to Justine, Cukor provides a subjective shot from Darley's point of view, showing Pasha on the other side of the Hosnanis' barred door; even driving away in his own car, he is framed like a captive. Pasha, like Nessim and Justine, like all the characters in Alexandria, is caught by his own character. Durrell's themes of relativity and subjectivity have been realized by Cukor.

Justine is hardly a perfect motion picture, but neither is it an artistic failure. Certainly it deserves to be viewed as something more than an oddity in George Cukor's career. It is an ambitious project, arguably the riskiest work ever undertaken by Cukor. As an adaptation of a virtually unfilmable literary work, it is often highly successful and as an often neglected work in the career of a great director, it merits critical reevaluation.

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Looking at *The Birds* and *Marnie* through the *Rear Window*

by Robin Wood

It was my intention not to contribute to this issue. While my admiration for Hitchcock's work has deepened over the years, I felt I had nothing more to say. Which is not, of course, to suggest that I have said everything there is to be said: Hitchcock's films exist as fixed physical entities on celluloid (give and take a bit of wear and tear), but the *perception* of them will vary from viewer to viewer and from age to age: in that sense there will always be more to say (or sometimes to retract or reject). I have also come somewhat to feel that I have been type cast. It is thirty-four years since the publication of the original *Hitchcock's Films* (a work with which I am now dissatisfied, though it had, I think, a certain historical importance in gaining Hitchcock serious critical recognition). Many seem still to prefer it (to me incomprehensibly) to the far more aware and sophisticated chapters I added to it for *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. But other members of the collective seemed to feel that a contribution was expected of me, that I have a certain duty, and I have let myself be persuaded.

There was, however, another immediate stimulus, and it has given me a fresh enthusiasm for what I initially saw as just a 'job'. I was invited to participate in the documentaries that are to accompany the forthcoming DVDs of *Rear Window*, *The Birds* and *Marnie*. The invitation came as something of a shock: I had never before been asked to work within such a commercial framework, aside from a number of aborted TV offers of interviews along the lines of 'Hitchcock is always called the Master of Suspense. Would you talk about this?' (No); '*Psycho* is the movie that led to all this emphasis on violence in the cinema. Would you talk about this?' (No.). I was wary at first, but then I realized that the interviewer was someone who both loved Hitchcock and respected my work, and that I would be allowed to say what I wanted to say. I felt surprised, honoured and challenged: I didn't want simply to repeat myself, and I also sensed an opportunity to address a wider audience than my books are likely to have reached. I had the great pleasure—the great *joy*—of reseeing the three films in question, and they sprang to life all over again: it wasn't exactly that I felt I was seeing them for the first time, the feeling was more that I was now really *seeing* them. This article has grown out of the experience. I can't promise that I am saying anything I haven't already said in some form, but I hope I may be saying it in a somewhat new way.

If the films remain the same, as images impressed on celluloid, 'Hitchcock', the meaning of the films, changes as the culture changes. We may see less, or more, but we see it differently, through the prism of a modified consciousness. I take my own work as a convenient example. My early book interpreted

'Hitchcock' primarily in terms of 'the human condition': the films presented a world of superficial and precarious order constantly threatened, often undermined, by some metaphysical 'chaos' that may erupt at any moment from beneath. This still seems to me a tenable way of looking at the films: I don't find it 'wrong' exactly, and it continues to be my starting-point in discussing *The Birds*. But I also don't find it very helpful, unmodified, in my attempts to confront contemporary reality and find ways of dealing with it and, hopefully, move toward change. I prefer today to view the films as a particularly incisive and radical critique of a particular (but very lengthy, with a history going back virtually to our beginnings) phase in our cultural evolution, with an emphasis on male/female relations. This need not necessarily mean that I don't believe there is such a thing as 'the human condition'. But I don't see how we can know this either way until we have fully investigated the workings of social construction and determined just how much of what we used so confidently and casually to call 'human nature' is subject to change and is therefore changeable. Such a position has the advantage (within a peculiarly depressing and debilitating period in which the metaphorical birds seem to hover over us like the Attack of the Fifty-Foot Vultures) of making things *not necessarily* beyond hope and irredeemable. Looking around me at our current phase of (alleged) civilization—in which scientists confidently predict the end of life on the planet within a hundred years if nothing is done, and nobody does anything—I cannot go further than that in optimism, but I suppose it is better than nothing. And I don't think one can deduce anything much more positive from Hitchcock's films.

Rear Window

Much has been made of the analogy between the opposite apartments and a cinema screen, as a projection of the characters' desires. Like so much Hitchcock interpretation (including much of my own), this is both inaccurate and simplistic. (I think it is Hitchcock's lasting and well-earned status as popular entertainer that deflects the kind of attention that would reveal just how complex and subtle the films are, but it is a status I hope he never loses: I sometimes feel guilty that I have perhaps contributed to a growing tendency to transform him into some kind of monumentalised museum exhibit, beyond all challenge, rather as Shakespeare has become). To understand the relationship between the main characters and the inhabitants across the courtyard, one must grasp the intricacies of what we (I of course include myself in this) have clumsily called 'identification'. Hitchcock sometimes (but rarely) encourages an identification he wishes to be total: the most perfect

example is Marion Crane in the first movement of *Psycho*, where we have a character possessed by precisely the two things our entire culture encourages us to be obsessed by, sex and money. But such an identification (and is it, after all, so complete?—aren't we also subtly encouraged to ask awkward questions such as, Shouldn't she be thinking ahead a little more? What will plodding, responsible old Sam say? Are they really ready to go off and be Bonnie and Clyde?...etc.?) is almost unknown *outside* Hitchcock. I submit that our 'identification' with characters in films (aside from the occasional compulsive axe murderer who may identify totally with Jason in the *Friday the 13th* movies for reasons other than a humane and altruistic desire to rid the world of the rest of the cast as swiftly as possible) is far more flickering and partial: something more like, Yes, I can understand exactly why he's doing that, but I wouldn't do it in quite that way, and I really can't stand all those expressions he keeps putting on. In other words, we take what we need or want, and then compare, criticize, accept, reject... This is precisely the way in which Hitchcock shows his characters 'identifying': Thelma Ritter's description of Jefferies as a 'window shopper' is more accurate than she realizes, beyond the sexual connotation she intends.

The extended sequence of Lisa's first visit to Jefferies' apartment establishes and develops this very thoroughly (though we should also bear in mind that his initial response to the 'film' he is supposed to be so obsessively watching—i.e. his immediate environment—is that it amounts to 'a swamp of boredom'—more J. Lee Thompson than Hitchcock, perhaps). Lisa arrives with her whole armoury of cunning seductions ('dinner at 21', a fabulous dress, her beauty, wit and poise, the charm she knows exactly how to use—or thinks she does), with the clear intention of luring him into the net of matrimony. She is in fact trying to buy him, which is precisely what he can't tolerate. She joins him in viewing the opposite apartments, and we are introduced, via their gaze, to the pathetic 'Miss Lonelyhearts', who is engaged in preparing her own seductions. The song 'To see you is to love you, and I see you everywhere' begins simultaneously on the soundtrack (coming, we assume, from one of the other apartments). But Miss Lonelyhearts' eagerly anticipated suitor is a figment of her desperate imagination. As she goes through the actions of welcoming him, seating him, pouring drinks, Jefferies raises his glass in an ironic toast, and we see her toasting her non-existent guest. The implicit comparisons are at once close and distant: Lisa's youthful beauty/Miss L's fading charms, Lisa's vintage champagne/Miss L's humbler wine bottle, 'dinner at 21'/a home-cooked meal, the elegant candles Lisa has supplied/the simpler ones of Miss L. The song ends, and its final words destroy the fantasy: the beloved is seen only 'in the same old dreams tonight'. Miss Lonelyhearts collapses at her table in sobs.

Jefferies immediately draws a parallel/contrast, at Lisa's expense and in his own self-defence: 'That's one thing *you'll* never have to worry about'. Which she promptly challenges ('You can see *my* apart-

ment from here?')—asserting her own sense of singleness and desire. Jefferies transfers his attention to the apartment of 'Miss Torso', who is entertaining several eligible young men simultaneously, and tells Lisa that her situation must be more like that—to which Lisa responds that Miss T is doing 'the woman's hardest job: juggling wolves'. Each character is using a *partial* identification (thinking him/herself into another's position) in order to draw comparisons, but the comparisons drawn, the interpretations they make, are invariably supportive of—and determined by—their own immediate needs. We may extend the principle to film criticism: even the most rigorously 'scientific' semioticians have shown themselves quite unable to exclude personal bias from their interpretations (though they may try to conceal it).

Which is no doubt what *I* am doing when I offer my own reading of the purpose of these comparisons: there is one thing that all three of these male/female relationship situations have in com-



Rear Window: the two dinners.



mon: the seemingly hopeless incompatibility of male and female viewpoints within our socially constructed arrangements of gender and sexuality. This—and the attempts to move beyond it—seems to me the core of Hitchcock's work, and of his importance to us today.

Consider how the sequence progresses, drawing another, and crucial, couple (and another, very different, dinner) into its frame of reference. Jefferies shifts his attention to the Thorwalds (with whom we have already seen him beginning to be preoccupied): Thorwald serves his apparently invalid wife dinner in bed, on a tray; she expresses her contempt for his services; he leaves the bedroom, closing the door; she promptly gets up and eavesdrops on his phone-call, which we may already guess is to another woman, a guess subsequently confirmed. We cannot of course hear her words, but her gestures eloquently express her scorn and venom. Here male/female incompatibility crystallizes into overt rage and mutual hatred. Without comment, Jefferies passes to the songwriter, struggling to compose at the piano (with clock-repairer Hitch's little cameo, alerting us to the importance of time throughout the film). To Lisa the romantic song sounds 'as if it were being written especially for us', which prompts the instant rejoinder 'No wonder he's having so much trouble with it'. Their lengthy (and potentially final, though perfunctorily patched up) confrontation develops directly out of all that has preceded it—and is followed, immediately after Lisa leaves, by the scream and smashing of glass which we later understand signify the murder. It would be going too far to say that Jefferies would like to murder Lisa, but it is clear that, on a certain level, he would like to be rid of her, despite her obvious fascinations, not because he feels nothing for her but because he fully grasps the impossibility of a relationship based on directly opposed desires.

The ending of *Rear Window* has often been seen as cynical (which merely shows what diehard romantics we are at heart, and how diehard romanticism always favours the male position). It seems to me as positive as it could reasonably and realistically be, given the film's basic premise. It's not only that Jefferies has discovered a whole new side of Lisa, and one that he can unreservedly admire: she has discovered it too. From the point where Lisa not only becomes an action heroine but actively enjoys the role, the relationship becomes at least possible. The traditional 'romantic' happy ending would have shown Lisa ready to submit completely to Jefferies' way of life. Hitchcock is far shrewder, fairer, more honest—and, as so often, implicitly anticipates a major premise of the feminist movement which the film precedes by a decade: Lisa is now ready to share in Jefferies' interests and values, not in any spirit of self-sacrifice, but because she wants to—but not at the expense of her own. The ominous implication is that there is—and, within the film's terms, can't be—any corresponding compromise on the male side. Lisa may be ready to fly off on dangerous missions around the world, but one can't quite envisage Jefferies attending her fashion shows.

As for all the other happy endings, we are invited to take them with more than a few grains of salt. The woman whose little dog Thorwald poisoned has a replacement—which in no way affects the validity and force of the central diatribe in which she denounces all the neighbours for not 'reaching out' (has she? Has Jefferies?). Miss Torso's reunion with her little tubby G.I. encapsulates a relationship based upon a common love of food and nothing more: after their ecstatic hug he makes straight for the fridge. As for poor Miss Lonelyhearts, she is with the composer whose song (and certainly not, as I culpably suggested in the original *Hitchcock's Films*, Jefferies, who is far too preoccupied elsewhere) saved her life. But just what hopes may we have for this decidedly unglamorous middle-class woman with a New York songwriter given to late-night cocktail parties with all his friends in evening dress? Lisa, perhaps, has 'reached out' to Jefferies, but the gesture has not been reciprocated. But it is precisely the possibility of 'reaching out' that is the concern of *The Birds*.

The Birds

I still find *The Birds* among the less satisfying—the less totally convincing—of Hitchcock's major works, but it is in one sense the most important and revealing of them: his closest attempt (it seems to me) at an explicit statement of his underlying metaphysical (or philosophical) position—which can only be, as all philosophical positions always have been, a response to the cultural realities within which he lived and worked. It is not surprising, then, that it is less satisfying than, say, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo* or *Marnie*: although much of it—most of it—is brilliantly realized, it retains something of the aura of a 'thesis' film, whereas in the completely realized works the thesis remains implicit in the artist's full imaginative/creative engagement with his material. Beside its enormous ambitions and the degree to which they are achieved, however, its occasional shortcomings—some stilted dialogue and moments of awkwardness in acting and editing (the long Melanie/Annie Hayworth duologue), the relative (by today's standards) inadequacy of some of its special effects—dwindle into insignificance.

Everyone asks what the birds 'mean', and many answers have been attempted. It still seems to me that Hitchcock goes out of his way to ensure that the birds *can't* be explained, or at least not entirely (the 'male gaze' theory is tempting but inadequate). Hitchcock said the film was 'about complacency'; the complacency of all the central characters is revealed by the birds as a very fragile affair indeed. Each clings to a facade that proves a totally inadequate protection against the terrors of existence—its unpredictability, the potential eruption of chaos, all those things we still don't know and therefore can't control or accept and live with, about 'life' but above all about ourselves, our own desires and impulses and motivations. Melanie has her pathetic veneer of brittle sophistication and self-assurance, Mitch his faith in the Law (which he practises not only in court but with everyone he encounters), Lydia her faith in the protective security of her husband, Annie her obsessive clinging to a romantic passion she knows to be hopeless (and about which the LP cover of *Tristan and Isolde* is eloquent). Lydia's, of course, has crumbled before the film begins, which is why she is the most vulnerable to the bird attacks, the first to collapse into defeat and apathy; Mitch is finally confronted with his own helplessness, in a situation on which the Law has nothing to say. Annie, the only one to meet a violent death, is (in a sense) redeemed by her commitment to children, for whom she gives her life. That this (of course only partial) reading of the film corresponds to Hitchcock's conscious intentions seems confirmed in his next film, *Marnie*: Mark Rutland's little speech (during the shipboard honeymoon, desperate to find something that might at least get Marnie talking) about the tropical bugs that disguise themselves in the pattern of a flower to avoid the attacks of birds has clear enough direct reference to Marnie but even clearer reference retrospectively.

But above all, what is being tested is the characters' ability to form successful and meaningful relationships, and here the birds actually take on certain positive connotations: the smashing of false facades becomes the prelude to an extremely tentative formation of new trust, honesty and mutual acceptance. There is of course no promise of a 'happy ending': indeed, there is no ending at all, the two magic words that traditionally signify the resolution of all problems never appearing.

Much has been written about the way in which the film frequently connects the bird attacks to 'the look': the initial attack seems provoked by Mitch's accusing council-for-the-prosecution stare at Melanie. No one will, I think, argue with this, but it requires modification: we may equally feel that Melanie herself provokes the attack, by her affectation of an uncaring and clearly false superiority. It is the attack that makes possible the continuance of the relationship: without it they would never have developed beyond mutual hostility and provocation. In this way, the attacks are linked throughout the early stages to tensions between

or among the characters: see, for example, the first *mass* attack, during Cathy's birthday party, where Melanie and Mitch, now moving tentatively toward an understanding and acceptance, are watched by (a) a jealous would-be lover and (b) a possessive mother, their looks at the couple triggering the birds' fury. The subsequent attacks are less obviously connected to 'the look': once unleashed, the birds' destructiveness spreads uncontainably, provoked less by individuals as by the tensions initially dramatized in them but endemic to the entire cultural organization. (The most convincing, sophisticated and complex extension of this kind of reading is that offered by Susan Smith in her forthcoming book, because she takes the argument well beyond 'the look' to link the attacks to the manifold tensions, both expressed and suppressed, among and within the characters. My own far less comprehensive account is indebted to her).

The film's central (and most explicit, most thesis-like) scene in the Tides restaurant, leading to the mass attack on the town, extends Hitchcock's theme from the particular to the general. The point of the debate is, precisely, the inadequacy of explanations: it exposes the failures of the major protective coverings which humanity has elaborated in its attempts to explain or justify the still inexplicable: notably scientific rationalism (the ornithologist who dismisses the attacks as 'impossible') and religion (the bible-spouting drunk who complacently announces 'the end of the world'). It all crystallizes, when the attack subsides, in the ultimate and desperate irrationality of the hysterical mother's accusation that Melanie 'brought' the birds because it all started when she arrived—the final helpless attempt at an explanation, its grotesque absurdity emphasized by the huge close-up.

Hitchcock is never simplistically optimistic about human relationships within our cultural arrangements; his apparent 'happy endings' are patently concessions and always heavily qualified. Yet his work does not lack strong positives: centrally, here, the implicit suggestion that if all the illusions and self-protective deceptions we erect around ourselves were stripped away, successful human relationships *might* (and no more than that) become possible. *The Birds* and its non-ending beautifully expresses the tentative nature of this possibility. In my original book on Hitchcock I likened Lydia's experiences in *The Birds* (plausibly, I still believe) to Mrs. Moore's in the caves of *A Passage to India*. I would add to this now, as qualification, another familiar moment of E.M.Forster's—the epigraph 'Only connect'. *The Birds* is about the seemingly insuperable difficulties that stand in the way of connecting, within our culture's gender expectations.

Marnie

When *Hitchcock's Films* was published in 1965 it was greeted—especially by any academics who happened to pick it up—as rather a laugh: to claim that *Vertigo* was among the cinema's greatest achievements was the height of idiocy, and if it wasn't swiftly established as such, this would be yet another symptom of our cultural decline, the abasement of 'standards'. My comparison of it to Keats's 'Nightingale' Ode (while not a moment that now greatly pleases me) was the occasion for many raised eyebrows, and it was with some amusement, many years later, that I learned that an early draft of the screenplay was entitled 'Darkling I Listen'. But the chapter on *Marnie* was the piece of resistance: I vividly recall being invited to some British university or other to talk about the film at a seminar, and it soon became clear that the object of this exercise was for



Three 'key' scenes from *Marnie*: 1. The office robbery



2. The honeymoon.



3. Confronting Mrs. Edgar and the initial trauma.

everyone in attendance to have a bit of fun at my expense, a pleasure of which I hope I was mean enough to deprive them. This is now, of course, history (and, like most history, probably inaccurate). But in my view *Marnie*, though now widely (but by no means universally) respected, has still not achieved the recognition it deserves, as one of Hitchcock's finest, most realized, most personal, most intense and disturbing works. Anyone who doesn't love *Marnie* doesn't really love Hitchcock.

To fully grasp the greatness of *Marnie* one must understand the precise nature of Hitchcock's concept of 'pure cinema': putting pieces of film together in order to create effects. The formula (an instance of Hitch's characteristic modesty, his refusal to make any claims for himself beyond the technical/aesthetic) is far too simple to describe what is actually achieved—he makes it sound like an elementary exercise in editing more suitable for a film school student than a major artist. Much more than editing is involved, and what finally matters is the *kind* of effects produced—their nature, their quality, their value, their complexity, their force. *Marnie* can stand as the supreme manifestation of this particular concept of 'pure cinema': from shot to shot, gesture to gesture, line to line, frame to frame, composition to composition, the film exemplifies the perfection of Hitchcock's method, the summation of his virtuosity: total control over effect, every concept *thought* cinematically. Any of the great set-pieces would demonstrate this: the opening ten minutes, the first robbery at Rutland's, the hunt and shooting of Forio, the climactic reclaimed memory. But the same goes for even the apparently static and lengthy, largely actionless, central Mark/Marnie duologue (car/Howard Johnson's/car). Yes, it's just two people talking, but every exchange is perfectly judged, in emphasis and tempo, and the build-up of tension is as much a matter of editing as acting. This kind of perfection can only come from an artist working at the highest pitch of imaginative-emotional involvement, and *Marnie* is clearly one of Hitchcock's most intensely personal films.

It must be recognized that this form of 'pure cinema' obviously represents a totally artificial concept of film: in lesser hands, without the artist's full engagement, it could easily degenerate into an intellectual exercise, into mere 'cleverness'. To talk of artificiality is not to denigrate the actors: everyone in the film is flawless, from Hedren and Connery right down to the gauche young office assistant who tries to interest Marnie in a Danish, or the Howard Johnson's waitress who, totally unaware of the undercurrents of suppressed rage, tells the warring couple who have dropped in from the freeway to 'be sure to come back now'. Yet ultimately everything depends on the assemblage of usually brief shots: we are very far removed from the actor-centred cinema of Renoir or McCarey, from all that we call 'Realist' cinema (with a capital R). The artifice is so transparent, in fact, that what is most remarkable is that, even while we are aware of it, awed by the sheer virtuosity, we never lose our emotional involvement: the creative intensity is never a matter of skill alone. It is this concept of cinema—its effects achieved, not by representing 'reality' (whatever that is) but by assembling little scraps of film—that easily allows for the most obvious artifice: the backdrops, the travelling-matte, the rear-projection, the notorious red suffusions, the expressionistic thunderstorms at emotional high points. Once one accepts the aesthetic principle, nothing is barred.

Perhaps, though, today, for many people the problem—the challenge—of *Marnie*, the cause of a certain uneasiness, is not the obvious artifice but Mark Rutland. Hitchcock himself expressed uneasiness about Mark in his characteristically joky trailer (he is tender and caring but also dark and menacing), and the attitude deducible from the evidence of the film is markedly ambivalent. The problem is that Mark offends many of our most precious guarded beliefs in political correctness, yet he appears to emerge as the film's hero. Hence the tendency I have noticed in recent years to demonize him, treating him as a monster of male chauvinism

(and even to see Marnie herself as a lesbian, for which I can find no plausible justification, although, interested, I have searched). We may find this tempting, but it does great violence to the film, and especially to its final sequences: it demands that we see the ending as worse than ambiguous or hesitant, that we read Marnie as simply choosing one prison over another, and perhaps even making the wrong choice. I want to set the record straight, and to ground this (partial) defence of Mark (despite my distrust of the species Great White Heterosexual Male) so securely in the film's detail that it will prove incontrovertible. Those who can't accept Mark on any terms whatever will, I'm afraid, have to abandon the film on grounds of its sexual politics.

Is the relationship between Mark and Marnie that of analyst and patient or of hunter and prey? Both readings are offered quite explicitly in the film, and both must be accepted. That Mark is attracted to Marnie because he sees her (initially) as a wild animal he can trap, dominate, tame and ultimately possess is beyond question; he is also instrumental in her cure. His attempts at amateur psychoanalysis (after reading a few books) are clearly not meant to be taken seriously *in themselves*: Marnie herself understands this perfectly, and the spectator surely identifies as much with her ridicule as with Mark's misguided efforts. The bedside analysis, however, which she deliberately provokes, precipitates her breakdown and marks an important step in the development of both characters: she has admitted the fragility of her mental state and her consequent need for help, for the first time in the film (it is obvious to the audience in her attempted suicide, of course, but there she immediately withdraws into her habitual protective 'bird' cover of irony); and Mark's attitude shifts from there on, becoming less that of hunter and tamer, more that of genuine concern.

Yet Mark alone does not cure Marnie, nor could he. Her progress toward cure (obviously still far from complete at the film's end, as suggested by the repetition of the 'Mother, Mother, I am ill' rhyme) is also dependent on other factors: the appearance of Strutt at the party (as if in answer to her cry for help, invited not by Mark but by Lil, and forcing Marnie to confront the reality of her peril); the foxhunt and its brutal, crucial aftermath, the shooting of Forio, later revealed as a reenactment ('There. There now') of the original trauma, bringing Marnie to the verge of what we now call recovered memory (after it, she can no longer steal the money). To answer what I understand Victor Perkins once set as a quite splendid examination question in a British university film studies course: No, Mark does not cure Marnie; but there would have been no cure without him.

For those who find Mark unmitigatedly loathsome the crucial scene is the honeymoon rape. I shall probably get into trouble for this, but to me the term 'rape' here, though not entirely inaccurate, still seems a little too clear cut. Yes, Marnie has said 'No!', and said it very forcefully; her terror is obvious, and Mark's tearing off of her nightdress is certainly an act of violation. The ensuing act of intercourse, however, is much more qualified. Marnie acquiesces. Why, exactly? Because she knows he will do it anyway? But this isn't clear to the audience, rather the contrary: Mark is looking thoroughly ashamed of himself (as he should be), and seems to have sobered up abruptly, shocked by her helplessness and by his own actions. She neither pleads nor struggles. It is not impossible to read her behaviour as suggesting that at some level she *wants* intercourse (though not, obviously, if it is accompanied by violence, which now it isn't). I had better say that I am quite aware that I am putting forward what is today a very dangerous and highly unpopular argument. But I stop short of condoning Mark's actions, and I think the film does too. We reach a paradox here: the action is wrong, but it is also a step toward cure. In this it is consistent with every such step throughout the film: every one is presented as at least an unpleasant, at worst a terrifying, experience for Marnie. That the suicide attempt is also ambiguous is spelled out by Mark's

suggestion that she could have thrown herself overboard, not into the ship's swimming pool. This enables us to read it, if we wish to, as a preliminary (and desperate, and very dangerous) cry for help.

It now becomes possible to chart Marnie's (and by necessary extension Mark's) progress through the film in four crucial, harrowing sequences, each taking her a step nearer cure: the honeymoon, the bedside psychoanalysis, the hunt, the recovered memory. It is not by any means impossible to read them also as bringing Mark towards the 'cure' he never quite realizes that he needs. Hitchcock is not so naive as to suggest that either reaches it. Mark (in direct parallel to Jefferies at the end of *Rear Window*) remains the further from it, precisely because he knows that, as a male in a male-dominated culture, he can function without it, as Marnie cannot. But at least he is shaken: the Great White Heterosexual Male has been made to face a great many ego-threatening facts: that he didn't understand the completeness of Marnie's withdrawal (her terror of being touched by men, as he takes for granted that he can touch her and embrace her, in his office, in his father's stables) in the first place, that he has never grasped the intensity of her anguish (the psychoanalysis scene), and that he finally doesn't know (as he thinks he does) 'what really happened', which has finally to be given him, not by the mother, but by Marnie herself. I conclude, then, with a detailed look at the climactic sequence and the ending.

We should perhaps also look more carefully at some of the things Hitchcock said about his own films: there are moments when the jocular facade slips. One such moment was his sudden, typically casual and offhand remark in an interview, that Forio represents 'the father'. I admit it puzzled me at first, the connection not being exactly obvious: Marnie's father neither appears in the film, nor is mentioned until the closing moments ('There was this boy, Billy...', a brief segment cut from the British release version, which is how I first got to know *Marnie*—was there a fear that audiences might laugh?). But Forio is directly linked to the sailor ('There. There now'), who, as the man about to engage in sexual activity with her mother, becomes the stand-in for the father of the 'primal scene'. Hitchcock's casual remark in fact gives us the crucial chain of connections: father-Forio-sailor-Mark. The causal chain, the progress to Marnie's at least potential cure, is given us clearly in the imagery and action of the climactic sequence, which, in the interests of clarity, I shall break down into its most significant 'moments'.

1. Mark's car drives up to the mother's house, in long-shot and high angle; the ship (backdrop) we saw earlier looms ominously at the end of the street, seeming to block any exit. We may already have guessed that the male figures who haunt Marnie's nightmares ('Them in the white suits') are sailors.

2. When Bernice (Marnie's mother) attacks Mark and he is fully occupied in struggling with her, Marnie's memory begins, quite independently of him. In her child voice she identifies him with the sailor (father, Forio) as the man who hurt her mother. Although it is Bernice who is violent, her hysteria displaces the guilt on to the man.

3. Knowing that this is the sign Marnie needs, Mark taps three times on the wall—the taps that instigate the memory: 'What do the taps mean, Marnie?'/ 'They want in'—a phrase with obvious sexual connotations.

4. 'He came out. He came out to me': the appallingly terrifying, horrible, disgusting thing that men do to her mother is going to be done to Marnie the child.

5. But what the sailor (very early Bruce Dern, already distinguishing himself in a minuscule but crucial role) does to Marnie is stroke her hair, kiss her in a clearly non-sexual way, and try to comfort her: precisely what the adult Marnie was still wanting her mother to do near the beginning of the film. The sailor, previously impatient for sexual satisfaction, is tender and gentle with

the child, clearly concerned for her.

6. Bernice pummels him as (in present time) she pummelled Mark, telling him to keep his hands off the child. He protests, quite rightly, that 'There's nothing the matter with my hands.' Marnie has stressed throughout the film that she hates to be 'touched'.

7. 'He hit my mama'—the height of Marnie's intensity. But he didn't! Bernice hit *him*, he was very careful not to hit her, only trying to hold her off. (But he *does* say 'Now don't go hitting me, you're gonna get hit yourself').

8. Bernice strikes him repeatedly with the fireiron, and he falls on her leg so that the legs interlock: the child's embedded image for the 'horror' of sexual intercourse. Bernice calls for Marnie to help her; the child grabs the poker and strikes. In present time Marnie is saying 'I hit him. I hit him with a *stick*'. Bernice now walks with a stick; there is no stick in the flashback.

9. 'There. There now.' Emerging from the memory/trauma, exhausted but suddenly calm, Marnie identifies the sailor with Forio, her adored horse whom she had to shoot. Her compassion for Forio is transferred, through time, to the innocent sailor she killed, at her mother's instigation. So much seems to be compressed into those simple words: that the sailor was not doing anything very terrible; that the terribleness was in her mother's imagination; that her mother was directly responsible for her own terror of the sexual act. It is the film's key moment, and any reading of *Marnie* has to account for it. It makes possible the tentative 'happy ending'. On its first release this film was ridiculed for its simplistic psychology; I don't think a comment on such a judgement is now necessary. Perhaps the film's finest psychoanalytic perception is the sense it conveys that ultimately Marnie is responsible for her own cure—that she is herself consistently struggling (on some subconscious level) toward the retrieval of the memory that so terrifies her. Certainly, in the bedside analysis scene, she uses Mark to that end, pushing him on until she breaks down; she insists upon destroying Forio herself, when Lil is on hand ready and willing to officiate, reliving the lost memory in a symbolic form that enables her to forgive and accept the sailor/father; and there would be no actual restored (and restorative) memory if she herself didn't lead into it (Mark doesn't know, and her mother is still insistently blocking it off). One might say that Marnie cures herself, using Mark as her instrument. [Note to Victor Perkins: Did I pass? B plus perhaps?].

After the memory Marnie makes one final attempt to obtain from her mother the affection she has always craved and which Bernice (Marnie being the constant reminder of her past) has always felt forced to deny her: she kneels (as she did earlier) at her mother's chair and lays her head on Bernice's lap, to have her hair stroked, as the sailor stroked it in the flashback. Bernice's hand reaches out, but she still can't bring herself to touch the living reminder of her deals with 'filthy men'; her hand withdraws, with her usual withdrawal into the myth of her 'accident' ('Get up, Marnie, you're achin' my leg'). Mark raises Marnie to her feet and strokes her hair, and Marnie accepts this. I submit that if you don't find this one of the most moving moments in cinema, you don't understand, or can't accept, the film.

The final Marnie/Mark exchange may remind us of the end of *Rear Window*, with its half-promising, half-sinister compromise: Marnie's 'Oh, Mark, I don't want to go to jail. I'd rather stay with you' exactly expresses its tentative nature, which Mark accepts with his 'Had you, love?', which equally exactly shows that he understands that this is a less than ideal response. But there is a crucial difference: at the end of *Rear Window* Jefferies has progressed very little, the compromise is all Lisa's; here, Mark has learned a lot—about Marnie, about himself. In this film (with *The Birds* intervening) Hitchcock comes as close to admitting that there might conceivably be a future for male/female relationships as he ever could.

Seeing and Believing: Sid Bernstein's German Atrocities Film and the Question of Hitchcock's Participation

by Florence Jacobowitz

In February, 1945, the Allied Command asked Sidney Bernstein, chief of the film section in the Psychological Warfare Division of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) to produce a 'German atrocities' film. Using footage gathered by British, American and Russian army units, the film would act as a document of visual testimony, attesting to what Allied troops found when they liberated the German concentration camps. The footage would provide irrefutable evidence of the German nation's responsibility for Nazi atrocities by recording the state of the victims found upon liberation and by documenting evidence of the collaboration of the many participating facets of German industry. The film would also contradict German and Polish civilian claims of ignorance by outlining the proximity of the camps to populated cities and towns. The film's objective—the establishment of national culpability—would also serve to help secure the German people's acceptance of the Allied occupation.

The concentration camps film has gained notoriety because it was never shown. The American contingent withdrew its participation from the project in July, 1945 and by September, British military authorities decided that documenting Germany's success with its agenda of carrying out industrialized mass murder on an unprecedented and unrivalled scale, was no longer politically expedient. What was subsequently suppressed and buried in the Imperial War Museum under the heading F3080, is also known for Alfred Hitchcock's participation in the project. Sidney Bernstein, an established British exhibitor and distributor who knew Hitchcock since the '20s through his work with the London Film Society, and had invited him to direct two short films for the Ministry of Information in 1944¹, asked Hitchcock to come to London for six weeks in the summer of 1945 to work on the concentration camps film. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of Hitchcock's contribution with any precision. He consulted with the film's editors, Stewart McAllister and Peter Tanner, as well as with Colin Wills, Richard Crossman and Solly Zuckerman, the writers responsible for the treatment and commentary; he made recommendations and he is credited as treatment adviser. Bernstein claimed Hitchcock "outlined" and "planned" the film².

I got Hitchcock over—he was a great friend of mine—because I wanted somebody to compile it together. There was a very good man called Tanner, and a number of good editors, but I wanted

the imaginative touch that somebody like Hitchcock could give. He came over to edit it and give it some kind of extra thing besides straight documentary.

Leni Riefenstahl pioneered 'imaginative' psychological warfare in filmmaking with her propaganda/art film, *Triumph of The Will* (1934) and a screening of it was set up for Crossman and others working on the concentration camps film. It is, therefore, not surprising that the decision was made to begin the film with a short history of the rise of the Nazi party, visually illustrated with excerpts from Riefenstahl's film. Bernstein was certainly aware of the value of "the imaginative touch", of "some kind of extra thing" even in a film which was made essentially to document and consolidate evidence of the German atrocities. In his interview with Elizabeth Sussex, Bernstein went on to explain the rationale for this, stating that "even in England there were people who saw the service film unit material and could hardly believe it was true". This is a telling comment which underscores the challenge facing the filmmakers involved in the project. The film footage offers visual first-hand testimony, provided by both liberators and inmates, and yet it still tests the parameters of believability. The scale and efficacy of systematized murder, the numbing cruelty and willful participation of those needed to commit these crimes, the physical state of the inmates upon liberation, extend beyond the schema and categories of experience and human relations with which one is familiar. It takes the eloquence and clinical descriptiveness of a gifted writer/witness like Primo Levi to begin to colour in the details of what he so aptly termed the 'univers concentrationnaire', the 'gray zone', a social entity only vaguely familiar and otherworldly. Bernstein's task was not only to prove that the strange landscape the liberators found was indeed true, but to imaginatively and creatively organize the footage into an argument—one which places the extreme nature of these atrocities *within* the realm of human accountability, and not as an extraneous aberration outside of it, left unaccounted for. The film was intended to remind the German nation that they must collectively share responsibility for what was uncovered at the sites of the Lagers. A document from 1945 outlining the purpose of the project emphasizes the need for absolute veracity as "It will have to be assumed...that in several years time the Nazis will either try to disprove the evidence or suggest that only a minority was responsi-

ble³. In fact, the Allied liberators already found clear evidence of the Nazi attempts to ensure that no witnesses survive, that the secret of the Lagers be destroyed. The film includes shots of the charred bodies of hastily killed camp inmates, murdered hours before their liberation. The process of erasure had already begun.

An atrocities film counteracts by adopting the strategy of exposure—it reveals the extent of the crimes—pinpointing location, apparatus used and the participants needed to ensure its thorough, systematic execution. The Nazi regime committed its brutality with the support of its corroborating “willing executioners”⁴. The German industrial and economic complex profited from the camps, exploiting its unlimited supply of inmate slave labour, in its recycling of expropriated goods (including the human body, objectified as an additional resource for the manufacture of market goods) in its supplying of tattooing equipment, chemicals and ovens needed to enact genocide. Film unit cameramen were directed to photograph any evidence “that will show the connection between German industry and concentration camps...”⁵, and there is a shot in the film which focuses on the nameplate of Topf and Sohne, a firm which proudly affixed its name to the efficient ovens they manufactured. Bernstein’s memory of one of Hitchcock’s primary contributions to the film was

the imaginative way he was going to show it to the German people...He took a circle round each concentration camp as it were on a map, different villages, different places and the numbers of people—so they must have known about it...Otherwise you could show a concentration camp, as you see them now, and it could be *anywhere*, miles away from humanity. He brought that into the film.⁶

The presentation of each camp is prefaced with a shot noting its location on a map. Dachau, a major camp which was established as early as 1933, is shown to be close to Munich. Buchenwald is seen to be near Weimar, Mauthausen near Linz. The voiceover notes that concentration camps were nestled in the heart of civilization, amidst “tidy orchards and well stocked farms”, near cities that harbour and nurture German culture, near romantic holiday resorts like Ebensee. This is a structuring motif later elaborated in Alain Resnais’ commemorative film, *Night and Fog* (1955). The implication is to insist that the camp is an extension of the social world around it, a well known secret. Besides the fact that inmates worked outside some of the camps, the idea implies their interdependence with society, that the camps are a dark mirror of 20th century civilization. One draft that Hitchcock approved includes the voiceover comment that the concentration camps were organized by the Gestapo as an enormous “Murder Trust”⁷. This notion is one that can be traced back to German Expressionism, and Siegfried Kracauer theorized the connection in his work, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University Press (Princeton, 1947). Cruelty, barbarity and violence are a potential of the modern industrial world. The ‘univers concentrationnaire’ was powered by the indifference and lack of shame and moral conscience evident in the enactment of mass murder. Hitchcock, Fritz Lang and others influenced by Expressionism were fascinated by these ideas. The original title of Lang’s indictment of pre-war German culture, *M*, “Murderers amongst us,” presents an ongoing theme in these artists’ work. A number of Hitchcock’s films made during the war, *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Lifeboat* (1944), *Notorious* (1945), highlighted the uneasy parallels between ‘normality’ and its fascist shadow. Hitchcock’s imaginative contribution that Bernstein sought out, was to weave this theme in with the visual testimony taken at the camps—the grotesque underside of humanity that defied description.

The footage taken at these camps at a precise moment in history (year zero, after Auschwitz) offers extraordinary, unusual testi-

mony. Like a photograph, its imagery is rooted in a physical reality—an emanation of what existed, of what the camera filmed. Unlike a still image, frozen in time and elegiac, moving images intensify the experience of a historical moment by their ability to capture time as well as space. Cinematic imagery conveys a presentness that eludes the photograph. Many of the panning shots, for example, reflect real time. Realism, the dominant style of the medium, is heightened by the semblance of continuity inherent in longer takes, reframing, panning, camera movement and the inclusion of sound. The absence of the intervening years since these images were shot is minimized by the vivacity of motion and time, of characteristics unique to cinema. One sees the footage and one believes that what is seen is truthful because the scene could not be staged and Hitchcock was concerned that all effort be made to ensure the absolute authenticity of the material. Peter Tanner, one of the film’s editors, recalled Hitchcock’s commitment to this and he describes a scene that “was all shot in one shot ... And it never cut. It was all one shot. And this I *know* was one of Hitchcock’s ideas, and it was very effective. There was *no way* for somebody seeing it that it could have been faked...”⁸ The document outlining the project’s objective emphasizes that it was “essential that the film should be factual and documented to the nth degree...”⁹; however the cumulative shots of skeletal people, still in their striped camp uniforms, only vaguely recognizable, as well as their counterparts—the already dead—the mounds of corpses being dragged and unceremoniously dropped and tossed into mass pits, give the film an oneiric quality which strains the spectator’s attempt to produce meaning. Here is a world that is so unfamiliar, so uncategorizable. The majority of the shots, those relentless unforgiving images of Lager ‘musselman’, listless and weakened into a state of painful silence, defy the schema needed to sort through and understand the reality perceived. The voiceover commentary tries to provide an explanatory framework for what is seen. The sardonic speaking voice sets up an ‘us’ (civilized Allied liberators) versus ‘them’ (devastated victims/guilty nation) position for the spectator. The pitiable condition of the inmates is described and the perpetrators are indicted along with the neighboring communities who sanctioned these acts through their indifference. The shots of healthier inmates, presumably more recently arrived, being tended, fed or cleaning themselves invite a degree of empathetic identification, but the majority of the imagery imposes a melancholic distance because of one’s estrangement from them. Ultimately the commentary cannot fully accommodate and place the accompanying footage; the surreal aspect of the events witnessed, the sense one has of looking at an open wound or the scene of a crime given its first public exposure shocks and offends one’s preconceptions of what is permissible to see, overextending the bounds of what is typically presented in the cinema, within the parameters of the documentary. The shots of some of the larger camps like Dachau are reminiscent of a busy con-

1. Two short films were made with a French cast and crew, *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, neither of which was shown in England (both are now available on video and DVD). Donald Spoto claims that Hitchcock was worried about *Bon Voyage* because one of the characters who was supposed to be a hero commits a murder (Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: the Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, Ballantine Books, New York 1983, page 285). Bernstein and Hitchcock had also begun planning their partnership in Transatlantic Pictures.

2. Sussex, Elizabeth, “The Fate of F3080”, *Sight and Sound*, 53.2 (Spring 1984), page 95.

3. Ibid. page 93.

4. This is the thesis and title of Daniel Goldhagen’s controversial book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (Alfred Knopf, N.Y., 1996) which argues this point—that the Nazi regime depended upon a compliant nation.

5. Sussex, Op. Cit. page 94.

6. Ibid. page 95.

7. Ibid. page 97.

8. Ibid. page 96.

9. Ibid. page 92.

tained metropolis, but looking more closely one sees that they are peopled with these strangely unmoving, not quite alive creatures. The camera sometimes lingers on a detail, following the trail made by the foot of a corpse being dragged to a burial pit. The tangled pile of corpses (what the Nazis termed 'figuren') no longer resemble humans—emaciated beyond recognition, with a marble-like veneer, one witnesses how they are irreverently thrown in a manner that seems to make their deaths as undignified as their time spent incarcerated in the camps. Although there is a logic to the necessity of haste because of disease, and the inability to treat the volume of corpses with more civility, the fact that this footage bears witness to social rites that are so appalling imposes a tension that is ultimately unresolvable. Should the cameramen document the female inmates' first showers in a manner that is almost voyeuristic, and disregards their right to privacy? Witnessing the cleaning and delousing process—the dusting of emaciated naked bodies with DDT—feels equally transgressive—one is privy to events and scenes that challenge what is socially deemed appropriate to be seen. Some of the scenes are remarkable for their inherent drama; in one of the few shot with sound, a group of S.S. guards forced to assist in the burial of inmates, under the guard of the Allied forces and the uncomfortable silent gaze of a group of civil officials brought from a nearby town, are being cursed and heckled by a group of newly liberated inmates, still strong enough to shout and express their torrent of anger. In another scene a group of local townspeople are paraded by tables set up with the grotesque products manufactured in the other world of the Lagers—human skin lampshades and artwork, shrunken heads of punished inmates, etc. One woman feels ill as a result of being forced to bear witness. Another shot is more whimsical—a newly posted 'Harrods' sign points the way to a clothing depot set up by British troops. Ultimately the repetition and quantity of the shots of the inmates, those dead or nearly dead, begins to wear away at the shock and builds some sense of familiarity with this other hidden secret place that is being unearthed.

The hallucinatory quality of this footage, its distancing strangeness, doesn't negate its authenticity, nor does it compromise the organizing argument which carefully situates these crimes against humanity within humanity. It does, however, attest to the difficulties of perceiving and processing information that surpasses or extends beyond cognitive experience. This is an ongoing theme in the concentration camps film. A British guard interviewed at the site of the camp in 1945, testifies that "the things in this camp are beyond describing. When you actually see them for yourself, you know what you're fighting for here ... A picture in the paper can't describe it at all..." A local burgermeister and other officials are brought in "to see for themselves". British members of parliament, "came and saw and were sick ... It has to be seen to be believed". A Reverend Stretch is interviewed and he claims, "I've been here eight days and never in my life have I seen such damnable ghast-

liness". A British officer addressing local citizens tells them "You who represent the fathers and brothers of German youth, see before your eyes ..." Visual testimony, captured on film, in many ways surpasses the knowledge of events one receives in written or oral testimony, particularly when the scale and extent of crimes like those perpetrated in the German Lagers are so unlike anything previously seen. The cinema exploits the relationship between vision and knowledge, and mediates between the intensely real and an oneiric sensibility. This is what charges the medium of motion pictures, and an artist like Hitchcock understood its power very well. While his contribution to this project may have been restricted and remains open to conjecture, it is interesting that so many of Hitchcock's films raise questions about the process of seeing images that transgress the limits, that expose the terrible underside of human potential.

The undifferentiated faces of the surviving camp inmates, many who died shortly after this footage was taken, are in themselves solid indictments of this era. Already silenced by ill health, their silent images alone survive on film to bear witness. The strength of this work lies in what is starkly included, in what was not edited out¹⁰ (which may account for its long suppression) and its existence is a testament against the permanent erasure of historical memory. Its lack of completion (the final reel is missing), and the forty years the film spent hidden in a vault by those who requisitioned it, sadly underline the political nature of historical commemoration and raise questions regarding how this testimony should be seen and used today.

A recent exhibition of mug-shot photographs of Cambodian victims of the Khmer Rouge, taken by their captors and murderers shortly before they were tortured and killed, was mounted recently at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The faces that confront the camera bear witness to the crimes perpetrated against them, to absolute cruelty, and insist on being remembered. These images haunt and demand attention much like the footage from the camps. The suffering etched in the negatives causes one to grieve and mourn. The photographs displayed at an art museum elicited some debate—are they commemorative artifacts or aesthetic works of art? Seeing the German atrocities film (under its file name "Memory of the Camps") on television, sandwiched between other television programmes, might raise the same questions. Nevertheless, as long as they are properly contextualized, these works need to be seen in a public forum so that they can offer the precious testimony that indelibly marks them. As the footage taken at the sites of these camps proves, seeing adds an entirely new dimension to memorializing events that defy comprehension.

10. Some have taken issue with the film's hesitancy to directly proclaim in the voiceover commentary that the majority of these victims were Jews. (A similar point of criticism can be made of Resnais' commentary in *Night and Fog*).

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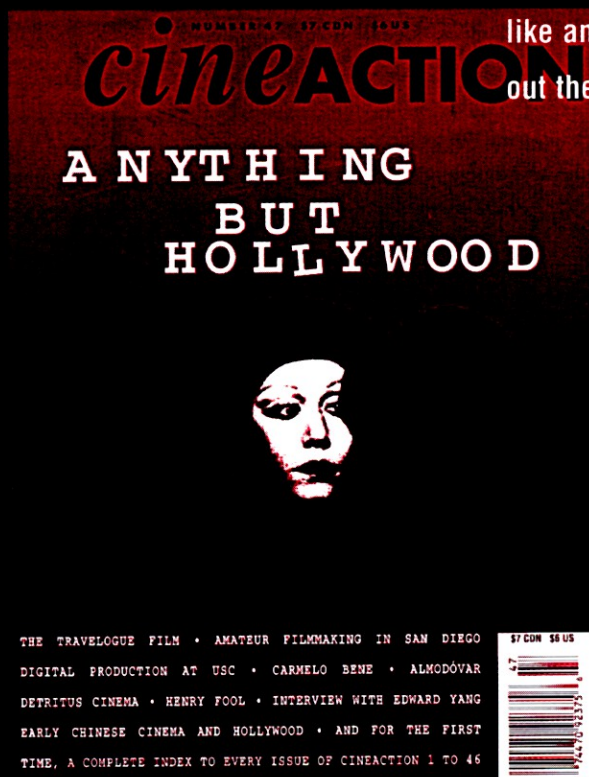
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